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No justice for the Grenfell tragedy 'until next decade'

Robert Booth
Haroon Siddique
Vikram Dodd

Justice for the 72 deaths in the Grenfell Tower fire may not come before the end of this decade, a former chief prosecutor has warned as survivors voiced growing fury over firms' "arrogant" refusal to admit wrongdoing.

The public inquiry findings of "systematic dishonesty" by multi-million-dollar companies involved in the tower's disastrous refurbishment prompted a clamour for accelerated criminal charges this week, seven years on from the blaze. Offences being considered include corporate manslaughter, gross negligence manslaughter, fraud, and health and safety offences, police have said.

Yesterday the former director of public prosecutions (DPP) Ken Macdonald warned that delays in the creaking justice system meant any criminal trials may not begin before 2029, so verdicts could be pushed beyond this decade. "Unless processes are massively expedited, justice is a very long way away."

Bereaved relatives and survivors

have called for charges to be expedited fearing "perpetrators literally getting away with murder". Anthony Roncolato, the last person to escape the 2017 fire alive, warned of continuing "pain and distress" as the fear of fresh delays emerged.

"[Think of] the fathers and the mothers without their children, without their loved ones, and in many cases, not only one person [lost] per family, but two, three, four, five, six," he said. "It's just crazy. There has to be justice. They have to deliver."

Lord Macdonald's warning that it could take a dozen years after the disaster before anyone is punished is based on the Metropolitan police assertion that the force needs 12 to 18 months to go through the public inquiry findings before recommending charges. On Wednesday the Met deputy assistant commissioner, Stuart Cundy, justified the wait, saying: "We have one chance to get our investigation right."

The stark findings of the inquiry - which concluded that firms employed "deliberate and sustained strategies to ... mislead the market", has fuelled pressure to speed up charges. **6** →



'I didn't know I'd won!'
Alice Tai's delight at second gold in Paris

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PHOTOGRAPH: JEREMY LEE/REUTERS

Macron defies the left by making Barnier PM

Angelique Chrisafis
Paris

Michel Barnier, France's new right-wing prime minister, has vowed to address the country's feelings of anger and injustice, promising a "new era" and a break with the past.

Barnier, the EU's former Brexit negotiator, took office hours after Emmanuel Macron appointed him to form "a unifying government in the service of the country" - an attempt to put an end to two months of political paralysis after a snap election.

Barnier, who at 73 is the oldest prime minister in the history of

modern France, said his first task was to "respond as best we can to the challenges, the anger, the feeling of abandonment and injustice that is too prevalent in our cities, on our estates and in the countryside".

The government's priority would be education, as well as security and controlling immigration, he said.

"What do we expect from a prime minister?" Barnier asked. "That they tell the truth, even if it's difficult - the truth about debt, and the truth about environmental debt, which weighs heavy on the shoulders of our children." He said he would approach

the role with "humility and determination" and promised "more action than words".

Macron shocked France by calling a snap parliamentary election in June, which resulted in a hung parliament and a deeply divided political landscape.

Although Marine Le Pen's far-right National Rally came top in the first round, tactical voting resulted in a leftwing coalition becoming the biggest political force in the final round. But the left fell well short of an absolute majority of 289 seats in the national assembly. **4** →

Mystery of Stonehenge altar deepens

New study casts doubt on theory that key part of prehistoric circle was made in Orkney

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News

MPs to vote on cuts to winter fuel allowance as Labour unease grows

Jessica Elgot
Deputy political editor

The Labour government has confirmed there will be a binding vote on whether to axe the winter fuel allowance for all but the poorest pensioners, as the former shadow chancellor Ed Balls said he had grave doubts about the decision.

The confirmation of the vote comes amid growing unease within the party about backing the plans. It will take place next Tuesday after the Conservatives submitted a motion to annul the government's change to regulations – a change that ordinarily would not be subject to a vote. Labour had said previously there would be no vote on the measure.

Balls said yesterday he thought the government needed “an escape route” from the policy and described it as “a mess”. He said on the Political Currency podcast: “They need to find a creative way to do what they said they were going to do, close the in-year black hole, and find an alternative way to do it, which could either be modifying what they’re doing on the winter allowance or finding some other way to close the black hole.”

In a sign of unrest in the parliamentary party, a number of Labour MPs have signed an early day motion asking for the change to be reconsidered and given more time to be communicated.

The motion was submitted by the new Labour MP for Poole, Neil Duncan-Jordan, who previously worked for the biggest pensioner pressure group, the National Pensioners Convention. The Guardian understands that MPs have attended briefings given by Duncan-Jordan on the implications of the change.

Two other new MPs have signed Duncan-Jordan's motion, which is not binding on the government and is essentially symbolic. They are the Stroud MP, Dr Simon Opher, a former GP, and Chris Hinchliff, the MP for North East Hertfordshire. Others who have signed the motion include leftwing Labour MPs such as Clive Lewis and Kim Johnson.

Downing Street admitted on Tuesday that the vote would be binding but declined to comment further on whipping arrangements.

The Tories said the government had been “dragged to the House of Commons by the Conservatives to hold a vote on their cruel decision to



▲ The former shadow chancellor Ed Balls said the policy was “a mess”

scrap the winter fuel payment for 10 million pensioners”.

Mel Stride, the shadow work and pensions secretary, said: “We welcome that the Labour government have U-turned and there will now be a vote on the Conservative motion to scrap the cruel cut to winter fuel payments.”

“Labour still wants to stop this vital support for the most vulnerable pensioners, but we would urge all MPs to do the right thing and back this Conservative motion to stop this punishing cut,” Stride said.

After the Commons leader, Lucy Powell, confirmed yesterday that a vote would be held, the Labour MP Rachael Maskell urged a rethink of the proposed cuts.

Cooper enlists MI5 to track gangs behind Channel boats

Rajeev Syal

Yvette Cooper will chair a summit today aimed at apprehending criminal gangs involved in smuggling people over the Channel in small boats, and the Home Office has disclosed that MI5 officers have been given a key role in operations.

Intelligence officers, Border Force staff and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) will be present at the meeting at the National Crime Agency's headquarters.

The home secretary will be joined by the foreign secretary, David Lammy, the justice secretary, Shabana Mahmood, and the attorney general, Richard Hermer.

The meeting is being held three days after 12 people died attempting the perilous journey across one of the world's busiest shipping routes. Another 257 migrants crossed the Channel on Wednesday.

Cooper said: “Women and children were packed into an unsafe boat which literally collapsed in the water this week. At least 12 people were killed as part of this evil trade.”

A statement from the Home Office said: “The UK intelligence community are deploying formidable covert capability to support the NCA to



▲ People trying to cross the Channel in a dinghy from Wimereux, France, on Wednesday, when 257 people arrived in the UK PHOTOGRAPH: BENOÎT TESSIER/REUTERS

Dambusters base Housing plan is scrapped

RAF Scampton, the former home of the Dambusters, will not be used to house asylum seekers because the plan does not represent value for money, the Home Office has said.

The former airbase in Lincolnshire was at the heart of a plan by the Conservatives to accommodate people who arrive in the UK by small boats and other unauthorised means.

Opening the site in autumn as planned would have cost a total of £122m by the end of its use in 2027. A total of £60m has already been spent on the site, according to the department, and work to close it will begin immediately.

Angela Eagle, a Home Office minister, said: “Faster asylum processing, increased returns and tighter enforcement of immigration rules will reduce demand for accommodation like Scampton and save millions for the taxpayer ... We have also listened to community feedback and concerns about using this site for asylum accommodation.”

Forty historians including Antony Beevor, Max Hastings and Dan Snow had written to the Home Office saying the plans to use the historic site, formerly home to 617 Squadron, as an asylum camp were an act of “cultural desecration”. Rajeev Syal

“Being cold at home can lead to stroke, heart attack, hypothermia, pneumonia and other such illnesses,” she said. “Will she [Powell] encourage the government to read the work of Prof Sir Michael Marmot and Sir Chris Whitty in this area, so that we can take a public health approach to people being warm at home, to mitigate the cost that could come without putting right mitigation around the winter fuel payments?”

Powell replied: “The decision to means-test winter fuel payments was not a decision that any of us wanted to take. It's a decision we've had to take in order to balance the books, as we have just discussed, because it's those on the lowest income who pay the very heaviest price when the economy crashes and the real cost of living goes through the roof.”

The shadow Commons leader, Chris Philp, said he had been contacted by constituents “desperate with worry”. He said one pensioner had written to him saying: “The allowance meant I could turn the heating on. Now I fear hypothermia during the coming winter months.”

Speaking on the same podcast as Balls, the former chancellor George Osborne said Reeves may have received poor advice from the Treasury. “It is a big challenge for Rachel Reeves, because she's the new chancellor, and it was her call. She can say to the civil servants and her political advisers: ‘Why did you push me into this corner?’ But ultimately, of course, it was her decision.”

penetrate and dismantle the gangs at every level of operation – from facilitators to financiers.”

More than 40 small boats and engines have been seized in recent weeks through cooperation with the Bulgarian authorities, the statement said.

The head of the government's new border security command will also be named soon, No 10 said.

The prime minister's official spokesperson said: “One of the first things that the government did was to launch the recruitment campaign for the border security commander ... the process has been thorough, and we expect to provide an update on that in the coming weeks.”

Charities have called for the Home Office to open safe routes for asylum seekers to cut down the number of boats crossing the Channel. Some claim that UK money is being used to “militarise” the French coastline, forcing people to take bigger risks.

Enver Solomon, the chief executive of the Refugee Council, said: “Any plan to tackle Channel crossings that's going to succeed must extend beyond enforcement.”

“Crucially, it should include expanded safe routes, such as refugee visas, schemes for family members to be reunited and far better cooperation with European partners.”

A pregnant woman and six children were among those who lost their lives on Tuesday in what is being described as the second deadliest Channel crossing in recent years. Their boat was “ripped apart” and sank off the northern French coast at Cap Gris-Nez.

The number of arrivals by small boats in 2024 now stands at a provisional total of 21,977.



◀ The technique mirrors HG Wells's *The Invisible Man*, which inspired films, such as the 1940 Universal Pictures version, and, above, the 1950s ITV series

PHOTOGRAPHS: THE RONALD GRANT ARCHIVE; ITV/REX

Vanishing act: scientists discover dye that makes skin transparent

Ian Sample
Science editor

Researchers have peered into the brains and bodies of living animals after discovering that a common food dye can make skin, muscle and connective tissues temporarily transparent.

Applying the dye to the belly of a mouse made its liver, intestines and bladder clearly visible through the abdominal skin, while smearing it on the rodent's scalp allowed scientists to see blood vessels in its brain.

Treated skin regained its normal colour when the dye was washed off, according to researchers at Stanford University, who believe the procedure opens up a host of applications in humans from locating injuries and finding veins for drawing blood to monitoring digestive disorders and spotting tumours under the skin.

"Instead of relying on invasive biopsies, doctors might be able to diagnose deep-seated tumours by simply examining a person's tissue without the need for invasive surgical removal," said Dr Guosong Hong, a senior researcher on the project. "This technique could potentially make blood draws less painful by helping phlebotomists easily locate veins under the skin."

The trick has echoes of the approach taken by Griffin in HG Wells's 1897 novel *The Invisible Man*, in which the brilliant but doomed scientist discovers that the secret to invisibility lies in matching an object's refractive index, or ability to bend light, to that of the surrounding air.

When light penetrates biological tissue, much of it is scattered because the structures inside, such as fatty membranes and cell nuclei, have different refractive indices. As



light moves from one refractive index to another, it bends, making tissue opaque. The same effect makes a pencil look bent when dropped in a glass of water.

Dr Zihao Ou and his colleagues at Stanford theorised, counter-intuitively, that particular dyes could make certain wavelengths of light pass more easily through skin and other tissues. Strongly absorbing dyes alter the refractive index of tissues that absorb them, allowing scientists to match the refractive indices of different tissues and suppress any scattering.

In a series of experiments described in *Science*, the researchers show how fresh chicken breast became transparent to red light minutes after being immersed in tartrazine solution, a yellow food dye. The dye slashed light scattering inside the tissue, allowing the rays to penetrate more deeply.

The team went on to smear the yellow dye on a mouse's underbelly, making the abdominal skin see-through and revealing the intestines and organs. In another experiment, they applied dye to a mouse's shaved head and, with a technique called laser speckle contrast imaging, saw blood vessels in the animal's brain.

"The most surprising part of this

study is that we usually expect dye molecules to make things less transparent. For example, if you mix blue pen ink in water, the more ink you add, the less light can pass through the water," Hong said. "In our experiment, when we dissolve tartrazine in an opaque material like muscle or skin, which normally scatters light, the more tartrazine we add, the clearer the material becomes. But only in the red part of the light spectrum. This goes against what we typically expect with dyes."

The researchers describe the process as "reversible and repeatable" with skin reverting to its natural colour once the dye is washed away. At the moment, transparency is limited by the depth the dye penetrates, but, Hong said, microneedle patches or injections could deliver it more deeply. The procedure has not yet been tested on humans and researchers will need to show it is safe to use, particularly if the dye is injected beneath the skin.

Many scientists study naturally transparent animals such as zebrafish to see how organs and features of disease, such as cancer, develop in living creatures. With transparency dyes, a much wider range of animals could be studied in this way.

In an accompanying article, Dr Christopher Rowlands and Dr Jon Gorecki, at Imperial College London, say there will be "extremely broad interest" in the procedure, which when combined with modern imaging techniques could allow scientists to image the whole mouse brain or spot tumours beneath centimetre-thick tissues.

"HG Wells, who studied biology under [the biologist and anthropologist] TH Huxley as a student, would surely approve," they write.

AI helps John Lewis bring back 'never knowingly undersold' tag

Sarah Butler

John Lewis is reviving its "never knowingly undersold" price promise, which it ditched two and a half years ago, as part of a marketing blitz as it heads into the all-important Christmas selling season.

The retailer said it would use artificial intelligence tools to match prices in-store and online for 25 competitors including Marks & Spencer, Boots,

Currys, House of Fraser and, on technology only, Amazon from Monday.

Under the new scheme, if customers can show within seven days they have found an item at a cheaper price at one of the 25 brands, then they will be refunded the difference. Prices will be adjusted every day based on the AI-led assessment of the market.

Peter Ruis, the head of the department store group, said John Lewis was making a multimillion-pound investment in the relaunch of the slogan – which it used for nearly a century

before it was dropped in February 2022 – including in the technology used, price changes and marketing.

He said 30,000 prices would be adjusted in the first week, backed by a TV campaign featuring a voiceover by the actor Samantha Morton and a reworking of Paul Simon's *I Know What I Know* by Laura Mvula.

The promotion is one of three similarly themed ads planned in the run-up to Christmas which John Lewis said would be the brand's "biggest ever investment in marketing in the second half [of the year]".

Ruis said he had begun working on bringing back the never knowingly undersold policy in February, shortly after rejoining the staff-owned group, as he said the removal of the price

promise had led shoppers to lose faith they were getting the best value.

"When we removed the price promise [shoppers] automatically assumed all prices went up," he said. "This is not a drive to more lower-priced product but a drive to what John Lewis has

always been – the democracy of really good essential prices right up to the premium level."

He said the relaunch would also emphasise its customer service, with its lengthy guarantees on technology or large furniture, while new systems would give online shoppers access to product within physical stores.

Ruis's predecessor, Pippa Wicks, ditched the price pledge as the retailer's profits dived, claiming the promise had lost relevance because it did not apply to online-only retailers.

Ruis said reviving the pledge would not hit profits but would drive sales. "One hundred years ago John Spedan Lewis created Britain's most innovative and famous brand mantra. It defines why John Lewis is so special."



▲ John Lewis plans to use AI tools to match prices with 25 competitors

Macron defies left by appointing Barnier as PM to lead 'unifying government'

Continued from page 1

Macron later ruled out asking the left to form a government after other parties said they would immediately vote it down.

The president's centrist faction and the far right make up the two other major groups in parliament. But Barnier's traditional rightwing party, Les Républicains, came fourth, with only 47 seats.

Barnier's appointment was greeted with dismay by the left, which will seek to topple him with a motion of no confidence.

The Socialist party leader, Olivier Faure, part of the leftwing coalition that won the highest number of seats in the election, said it was a "denial of democracy" for Macron to appoint a prime minister from the party that came fourth. "We're entering a crisis of regime," Faure said.

Jean-Luc Mélenchon of the

leftwing party La France Insoumise (France Unbowed), said the election had been "stolen" from the French people.

Controversially, Macron appears to be counting on the National Rally (RN) to keep Barnier in power by voting against a no-confidence motion.

The RN indicated yesterday that it would not automatically vote down Barnier and would wait and see what sort of programme he laid out in his first address to parliament.

Barnier was known for almost 50 years in rightwing French politics as a centrist, liberal-minded neo-Gaullist, devoted to the European cause.

But in 2021, he stunned observers by significantly lurching right and hardening his stance on immigration and security as part of an unsuccessful attempt to become the presidential candidate for the right against Macron in 2022.

Macron's predecessor, François



France's outgoing prime minister, Gabriel Attal, left, with his newly appointed successor, Michel Barnier, at the handover yesterday

PHOTOGRAPH: SARAH MEYSSONNIER/REUTERS

Hollande, said he believed Le Pen's party had "given a kind of endorsement" to Barnier's appointment.

During a summer of political stalemate, Macron took weeks to begin to acknowledge that he had lost the snap election. His centrist party lost seats and went from its position as the largest grouping in parliament to the second grouping, behind the

left alliance. After the July election deprived Macron of his relative majority in parliament, he drew out the appointment of a new prime minister for a period unprecedented since the second world war, through the July-August Olympic Games and beyond.

But Macron has sought to defend his legacy and protect the changes he

has pushed through in recent years including a rise in the pension age and a hardline immigration law. Some around him have sought to argue that France as a whole has shifted to the right, despite the left alliance winning the biggest share of seats.

Barnier served two stints as an EU commissioner and handled the thorny negotiations on Britain's exit from the EU. He also served as a minister under the right-wing administrations of presidents Jacques Chirac and Nicolas Sarkozy.

The European Commission president, Ursula von der Leyen, welcomed Barnier's nomination, saying she knew he had "the interests of Europe and France at heart".

It remains unclear if Barnier will fully try to implement Macron's political agenda or bring in new proposals. He will need to negotiate with other parties to get legislation adopted in parliament.

Barnier replaces Gabriel Attal, who resigned on 16 July but was kept on by Macron in a caretaker capacity.

Reacting to the news of Barnier's appointment, Keir Starmer's spokesperson said: "We wish him all the best in his new role."

Additional reporting Lisa O'Carroll

Profile

Rightwing veteran facing his toughest challenge

Angelique Chrisafis Paris
Daniel Boffey

He calmly but firmly negotiated the UK's departure from the EU after years of British squabbling over Brexit, and prefers consensus to political punch-ups. But Michel Barnier faces his toughest challenge yet as France's new prime minister amid the country's biggest political crisis in decades.

The discreet rightwinger, 73, known for his sensible anoraks, love of spreadsheets and ever-present briefing dossiers wedged under his arm, is facing a baptism of fire in a deeply divided French political landscape.

The left alliance, which won the biggest number of seats in the new parliament but fell short of an absolute majority, says his appointment is undemocratic and he should be brought down by a no-confidence vote. Many on the left point out that he voted against the decriminalisation of homosexuality in 1981.

Marine Le Pen's far right say they will hold fire and judge him on his programme first. But two far-right MPs recently described Barnier,



now France's oldest premier in modern history, as a Jurassic Park-style "fossil" and a "French Joe Biden" who is always undecided.

Another far-right MP said Barnier, who served as a minister long ago under the right's Jacques Chirac and Nicolas Sarkozy, had been "brought out of mothballs". This was at odds with French voters turning out en masse in July's snap election seeking change, they said.

Against a backdrop of political rivalry, there is an urgency to Barnier's appointment, announced yesterday by Emmanuel Macron after nearly two months of political deadlock. Time is running out to prepare the 2025 budget amid fears of austerity measures and deficit clashes with the EU.

Barnier was known for most of his career as a centrist devoted to

the European cause, who called himself a "patriot and a European".

But he veered to the right in 2021 during an unsuccessful attempt to challenge Macron for the presidency.

At the time, Barnier claimed that unregulated immigration from outside the EU was weakening France's sense of identity. He believed the UK's vote to leave the EU showed the dangers of allowing societal divisions to fester.

Shocking many in Brussels, he called for a French moratorium of three to five years for non-European immigrants, under which even family members joining immigrants would be stopped, and called for France to regain legal sovereignty from EU courts.

Overall, though, Barnier's political views are close to

Michel Barnier, far right, during Brexit talks between the UK and the EU, where he took centre stage

PHOTOGRAPH: FRANÇOIS LENOIR/REUTERS

Macron's pro-business, pro-Europe stance. Macron wanted a prime minister who would not try to undo controversial changes pushed through in recent years, in particular a rise in the pension age that angered the left. The president also wanted to ensure no tampering with his hardline immigration law.

Barnier had previously said he wanted to return to a leading role in French politics. After the 2020 post-Brexit agreement was signed with the UK, he said he realised on Christmas Eve that he missed France and wanted to be "useful" in French politics. "I've never been a technocrat, I've always been

a politician," Barnier said when he tried to become presidential candidate for the conservative party Les Républicains.

Born in a suburb of the French Alpine city of Grenoble, he is devoted to the Savoie area of the Alps. He has long styled himself as dependable elder statesman - a mountaineer and hiker from the Alps, who built his career in local village politics, likes walks in ancient forests and says it is crucial for leading politicians to "love trees".

He entered parliament aged only 27 in 1978. He served four times as a government minister and twice as an EU commissioner. As the commissioner for internal market and services, he negotiated an extensive new regulation of financial markets after the global crash, including reforms unpopular in the City of London.

During the Brexit negotiations, he was probably better known in the UK than in France. British politicians often tried to soften him up with food - David Davis prepared a sumptuous lunch of Welsh lamb in Downing Street in 2017. But Barnier was known in Brussels to stick to plain fish and spinach at lunch.

Barnier has been critical of Macron in recent times, criticising his decision to call a "risky" June snap election and calling his top-down way of running the country "solitary" and "arrogant".

In 2022, when Macron's centrists lost their absolute majority in parliament but remained the biggest force, Barnier said "Macronism" was on its last legs.

Now, in a parliament divided between three warring groups - the left, the centre and the far-right - Barnier is under pressure to show how that culture of compromise might work. As Barnier himself often liked to remark during the Brexit talks, "the clock is ticking".

Oasis reunion Watchdog to probe ticket sales fiasco

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Mike Lynch yacht Two victims may have suffocated – source

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National

Campaigners call for foods to carry cigarette-style health warnings

Denis Campbell
Health policy editor

Hard-hitting cigarette-style warning labels should be put on everyday foodstuffs, new taxes imposed on salty products and junk food sponsorship of sport banned to cut rising deaths from heart disease, health campaigners have said.

These “bold” measures should be imposed as part of a determined drive to reduce the number of people dying prematurely from heart attacks and strokes, they said.

The British Heart Foundation (BHF) is also proposing other action to tackle the UK’s increasingly bad diet, including junk food firms no longer being allowed to advertise on billboards or radio.

The charity is urging the government to force the food industry to start making its products more nutritious by stripping out what are often high – but hidden – levels of salt and sugar which are damaging to health.

Taking such radical steps could cut the death toll of people in England dying from heart disease before they reach 75 and save about 11,000 lives a year by 2035, the BHF estimates.

Cardiac deaths have risen since 2019-22, after falling for 60 years before that. Overall 39,000 people in England died before their 75th birthday in 2022 – the highest number since 2008.

The charity plea follows Keir Starmer making clear last week that his administration was willing to take tough action to tackle deeply-ingrained public health problems which cause disease, disability and death, such as by potentially banning smoking in some outdoor places.

The BHF is asking ministers to compel food producers to put hard-hitting warnings on cans, bottles and tins of their products in order to

alert people to how unhealthy they are. Those labels would have to be mandatory because simply asking profit-driven food companies to voluntarily reformulate their products to make them healthier does not work, the charity added.

Its proposed ban on firms whose products are deemed unhealthy under government guidelines sponsoring sports events would bar the energy drinks maker Carabao from attaching its name to English football’s League Cup, McDonald’s from sponsoring the Football Association’s youth development programme and KP Snacks from being an “official team partner” of the Hundred cricket competition, for example.

“A new levy on salt and sugar could prevent almost 2m cases of chronic disease and also raise up to £3bn a year,” the BHF said in a 22-page action plan. The sugar tax imposed on soft drinks in the UK in 2018 has made many drinks healthier and improved child health.

The charity is also recommending that ministers extend the planned ban on junk food adverts being aired before the 9pm TV “watershed” or online to billboards and radio too and that “buy one get one free” offers, which recent governments have toyed with, are also outlawed.

Bite Back, the campaigning arm of the chef Jamie Oliver’s organisation, backed the BHF’s call.

“We need this government to step in and introduce stringent regulations that prohibit the big food companies’ predatory marketing tactics of unhealthy products. These measures must make it easier for everyone to be healthy and protect young people from being the cardiac statistics of the future”, said James Toop, its chief executive.

The Food and Drink Federation said producers agreed that bold action was needed to address bad diet and excess weight.

“Businesses have invested more than £160m since 2023 to create healthier food and drink by ... adding fibre, fruit and vegetables alongside launching new products and smaller portion sizes,” a spokesperson said.

A Department of Health and Social Care spokesperson said: “Cardiovascular disease is one of this country’s biggest killers, and this government has already taken action to tackle it, recognising that prevention is better than cure.”



‘I want a new generation to learn the skills for life and belonging I felt when I needed them most’

Dwayne Fields
UK chief scout

◀ Dwayne Fields in the Antarctic for Endurance: Race to the Pole for Channel 5. Below, Fields at the London estate where he grew up

PHOTOGRAPHS:
OCTOBER FILMS;
ANSELM EBULUE/
THE GUARDIAN

Adventurer Dwayne Fields takes over from Bear Grylls as UK chief scout

David Batty

The Scouts have announced that Dwayne Fields, the first black Briton to reach the north pole, is the UK’s new chief scout.

Fields, a TV presenter, explorer and naturalist, is the first person of colour to lead the organisation, which has half a million young members and adult volunteers. He will succeed the TV star Bear Grylls, who was appointed in 2009.

The Scouts said a key part of Fields’ mission will be to attract new volunteers, especially in communities new to the organisation.

Fields, who has been an ambassador for the Scouts since 2017, will be visiting these areas and “encouraging and inspiring teams to grow the movement”.



Fields was formally invested as chief scout yesterday at Scout Park in north London, where he spent time in cub scouts as a child.

He said: “Scouts helped shaped who I am today and I hope my story will encourage others to join and achieve their dreams.

“My volunteer leaders believed in me as a young person and taught me to believe in myself. They showed me I could do anything I put my mind to and others would help me along the way.

“Now I want a new generation to learn the skills for life, friendship and belonging I felt when I needed them

most. I want to show that the outdoors is a place for all us to be at our best and truly open to all.”

Born in Jamaica, Fields came to the UK at the age of six. Growing up in inner-city London, he became a victim of both knife and gun crime, and also lacked access to nature. But he was offered “new horizons” with the Scouts, according to the organisation.

He went on to become the first black Briton to reach the north pole in 2013 and has since had a successful career in adventure and TV, presenting shows on Channel 5, Disney+ and National Geographic.

11,000

Number of lives that could be saved each year by 2035 by changes to food marketing, according to the BHF

£3bn

Amount the BHF says could be raised each year by a new levy on salt and sugar to help prevent chronic disease

National
Grenfell inquiry

Wait for justice on Grenfell may last until next decade, says former DPP

Continued from page 1

Yesterday former senior detectives questioned the Met's tactics. "I don't understand why it should take so long," said Mike Barton, a former chief constable of Durham police and former lead for crime operations for the National Police Chiefs' Council. "They are not likely to uncover any new significant evidence now. Prolonging [inquiries] never helps."

The former Met chief superintendent Dal Babu said: "It seems excessive. You'd expect them to move much more quickly. Given the outrage felt by the public, there does not seem to be any great transparency about why there are these delays."

Frustration over the police timetable risks being compounded by chronic problems in the court system, which Macdonald said were caused by austerity policies – also one of the causes of the Grenfell disaster, given cuts to central and local government building control departments.

"The criminal justice system is still suffering terribly from austerity cuts which did enormous damage," Macdonald said. "The upshot is that it now takes years for cases to come to trial after charge. Criminal cases arising out of Grenfell are likely to be many and complex."

"The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) is speaking of charging decisions in 2026. This is probably optimistic. But it could be two or three years later before trials can be heard. Some are potentially talking about 2028, 2029."

Three of the largest companies involved have issued statements which do not accept the findings of inquiry, leading bereaved



relations and survivors to brand them "arrogant" and "charlatans". The government and local council, by contrast, have apologised for decades of serious failings.

The public inquiry, led by Sir Martin Moore-Bick, found that the firms that made the cladding and insulation products – Arconic, Celotex and Kingspan – had behaved with "systematic dishonesty" and manipulated safety tests.

US-based Arconic denied it had concealed information from or misled any certification body, customer or the public. Irish-based Kingspan said the report showed the type of insulation used was "immaterial", and that some "deeply regrettable" behaviour in part of its business was historical and had not caused the tragedy. Celotex, a subsidiary of the French group Saint-Gobain, said the decisions to use its combustible product on the tower were made by construction industry professionals.

▲ The damning report into the Grenfell fire has led to renewed pressure for charges to be laid

PHOTOGRAPH: VUK VALCIC/ZUMA PRESS/EYEVINE

Shah Aghlani, who lost his mother and aunt in the fire, said: "I am not surprised by the way these charlatans are behaving. That is why we need strong prosecution and penalties. They will continue to deny, deny and deny. The CPS must explain now what they are intending to do. If the charges are weak and minor, then they must explain why."

Ed Daffarn, who escaped from the 13th floor, said of the responses: "I am angry, but I am not surprised. I don't expect crooks and killers to admit to their crimes."

Roncolato said that when he saw the statements he "realised the arrogance of these people ... the way that they think they are like God, that they are untouchable".

Kingspan referred back to its

original statement, which it stressed welcomed the report's publication, expressed regret at historical failings and outlined extensive measures taken to address them. Celotex said it would not be appropriate to comment during the police investigation but "we remain committed to providing full co-operation to all official investigations". Arconic was also contacted for comment.

The threat of a delay to justice has prompted questions about the original decision by the police to wait until the end of the public inquiry before pursuing charges. Michael Mansfield KC, who represented bereaved survivors and residents at the inquiry, said the police investigation should have come first.

"You decide what's the most important thing here. The most important thing, where there are obvious offences, is you investigate at the earliest chance. Justice delayed is justice denied." An inquiry could have been opened and continued work in the background in private.

Sir Max Hill KC, the DPP from 2018 to 2023, said the general principle that proceedings that carry a risk to the liberty of a subject should take precedence over other proceedings had been trumped by a political decision by Theresa May to announce a public inquiry immediately. If Grenfell did result in criminal cases "the judiciary and the court service will do everything they can to bring it forward for trial as soon as possible".

Alison Saunders, Hill's predecessor in the role, said 18 months was reasonable before the police gave files to the CPS but expressed fears about a subsequent delay given the state of the criminal justice system.



'Living in limbo' How survivors were failed in the days after fire

BAME deaths Families say report ignored racial bias

Neha Gohil

Community affairs correspondent

Grenfell families have criticised the final inquiry report for failing to fully address the disproportionate impact the tragedy had on diverse and marginalised communities.

The damning report on the fire was published on Wednesday and found decades of failings by central government and corporations. It concluded that all 72 deaths in the 2017 blaze were avoidable.

The chair of the inquiry, Sir Martin Moore-Bick, blamed "false and misleading claims" by firms over the safety of insulation used in the tower's refurbishment, and said concerns raised by the tenants were ignored.

However, for some bereaved families the 1,700-page report did not examine the disproportionate impact the fire had on residents from marginalised backgrounds.

According to submissions to the inquiry, 85% of Grenfell Tower's residents who died in the fire were of black, Asian or minority ethnic (BAME) origin.

Nabil Choucair, who lost his mother, his sister, her husband and their three daughters in the disaster, told the Guardian: "Most of the people that were affected or died were of BAME origin. They were never listened to or their problems dealt with."

"We were fighting" to get the inquiry to look at racism "and they didn't. You have to look at how families were being treated differently."

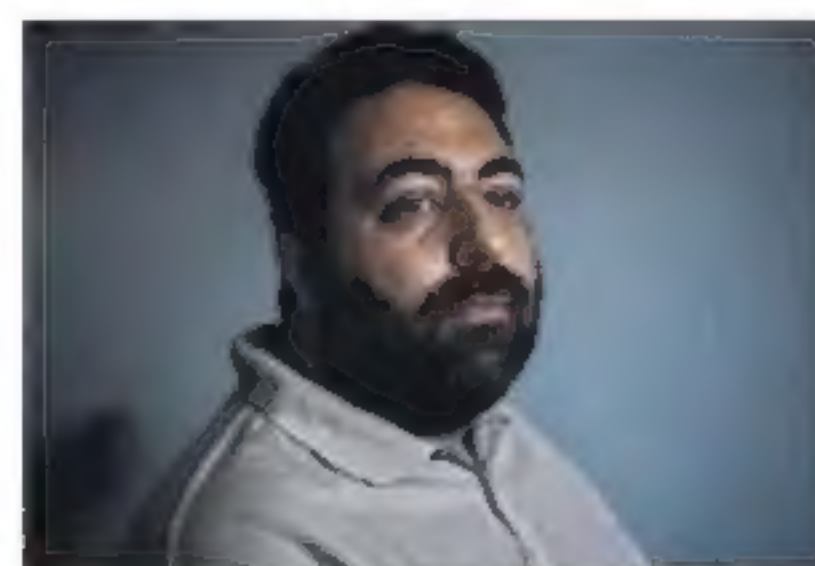
Choucair, along with other bereaved relatives, survivors and their lawyers, called on the inquiry in 2020 to look at the role of institutional racism and for it to be included in the terms of reference, with one lawyer describing it as the "elephant in the room".

The final report on the fire did address concerns about racism, saying: "Our response to those who

wanted us to investigate racial and social discrimination has always been that we would look out for it and that if we came across any evidence that racial or social prejudice might have affected any of the decisions that led, directly or indirectly, to the disaster, we would examine it thoroughly and publish our findings, as befits an inquiry seeking to uncover the truth."

However, it said the inquiry had found "no evidence that any of the decisions that resulted in the creation of a dangerous building or the calamitous spread of fire were affected by racial or social prejudice".

Moore-Bick said the inquiry had seen "some evidence of racial



▲ Nabil Choucair said victims of BAME origin 'were never listened to'

discrimination" in the way families were treated after the fire. In particular, the inquiry found the council showed "no regard" for the cultural or religious needs of the Muslim residents, who were observing Ramadan.

The report also found evidence that the tower's landlord, the Kensington & Chelsea Tenant Management Organisation, "failed over the course of years to treat residents of the tower and the Lancaster West Estate more generally with the courtesy and respect due to them".

Yvette Williams, the co-founder of the campaign group Justice4Grenfell, said the failure to include race in the inquiry's terms of reference meant society could not learn properly from the findings. "That's what's glaring for us," she said. "That if you don't get those terms of reference right, you don't learn from it ... there is a lead-up to Grenfell and it doesn't happen in a vacuum. Race and diversity plays a huge part in that."

"If the fire happened somewhere else, where there were different tenants, would we be where we are today?" she asked.

The Grenfell Tower inquiry declined to comment.



▲ A child places a candle among the floral tributes left in June 2017 to the 72 people who died in Grenfell Tower
PHOTOGRAPH: WILL OLIVER/EPA

Emine Sinmaz

Maryam Adam said her whole body shakes when she recalls the horror of the Grenfell Tower fire and its immediate aftermath.

She was three months pregnant when she escaped the inferno and stood outside aghast, watching the flames rise up the 24-storey block in west London as her neighbours screamed for help.

In the hours and days that followed, she said she and the community were abandoned and left to fend for themselves. "They treated us really, really badly. The council and the government failed us," Adam, 48, said through tears. "I didn't receive any help in the early days from my council."

Adam, who had experienced miscarriages and a difficult pregnancy, became resigned to sleeping on the floor of her temporary accommodation because the bed was too high

for her to get into. She ended up staying at that hotel for five months, alternating between sleeping on a mattress on the floor and a sofa bed while anxious about her pregnancy.

A seven-year public inquiry culminated on Wednesday in a report that laid bare not only the systemic failings in the run-up to the 2017 fire, but also how the survivors were "comprehensively failed" in the immediate aftermath of the blaze.

It said the emergency response of the government and local council, the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC), was "muddled, slow, indecisive and piecemeal", with aspects demonstrating "a marked lack of respect for human decency and dignity".

In a 1,700-page report, the panel led by Sir Martin Moore-Bick detailed how survivors were abandoned, without information about where to go or what to do, in scenes that were compared to a "horror film" and "war zone". It said many residents walked in the early hours to community centres

that had opened in the absence of support from the authorities.

The report also said that those frantically searching for loved ones experienced feelings of "utter helplessness and despair".

"It rapidly became apparent to them that neither the representatives of the council nor the tenant management organisation were able to provide

even the most basic information," it said. As a result, it added, the community felt compelled to compile its own list of the missing and piece together its own picture of what had happened.

Adam, who was born in Somalia and raised in Sudan, told how she was one of the first people to escape the fire, which started in her neighbour's fourth-floor flat, fleeing in just her slippers and pyjamas. She briefly slept in a neighbour's car before walking to the nearby Clement James Centre, which had opened its doors. From there, she was taken to the hospital by ambulance after falling ill.

"At the hospital they said the baby's breathing was OK. As soon as I heard that I left," she recalled.

She and her husband, Abdulwahab, were desperate to speak to the council before it closed for the day to arrange temporary accommodation but she did not receive a call back. She ended up going to the council building herself and was eventually given an Oyster card for travel, and temporary accommodation in a hotel. But Adam, who had a slipped



▲ Maryam Adam, who escaped while pregnant with Mohammed

disc, said the bed was too high and that the hotel only provided them with breakfast and lunch and did not take into consideration that her husband was observing Ramadan.

Moore-Bick's report highlighted this failing, saying Muslim residents were not provided with halal food and that it was not possible for them to observe the requirement to eat at set times.

The council had "no regard for their cultural or religious needs" and people suffered "a significant degree of discrimination in ways that could and would have been prevented if the guidance had been properly followed", the report said.

"We do not believe those were isolated incidents limited to a few individuals and families. The evidence suggests the experiences of those, particularly from Muslim and minority ethnic communities, whose basic needs were not met were symptomatic of a more general, systemic failure on the part of RBKC to think about and plan for those needs in advance," it added.

In many cases, RBKC failed to provide adequate emergency accommodation, and its allocation was "confused and inconsistent", the report said. It described cases in which people were placed in rooms on high floors – despite having fled a burning high-rise block – or in areas far from hospitals where relatives were being treated.

In other cases, families of four and five were given one room, while cots were not available for those with babies. It also highlighted Adam's plight in being forced to sleep on the sofa or floor.

There was also confusion about the provisions available. One survivor, who lost her son in the fire, told the inquiry she did not know that she was entitled to food and so restricted herself to one meal a day. Others had heard that the council would only pay for drinks, so they only ordered drinks.

The arrangements for obtaining food at some hotels made some people "feel like refugees", the report said. "Survivors described it as living in limbo, with no space to heal."

There were also significant problems in providing financial assistance to those affected by the fire, with some people being told they were not entitled to support. "Although they did not feel ready to do so, some felt they had to go back to work soon after the fire simply because they could not afford to do otherwise," the report said.

It added there was limited psychological support available in the aftermath of the fire, with survivors describing how they struggled with their mental health, desperately needing help but not knowing where to get it at a time when they were at their most vulnerable.

Adam and her husband have now been rehomed in Kensington, where they are raising their son, Mohammed, aged six. "But when I remember that night all my body shakes even until now," she said.

▼ The inquiry report found a chain of failures in the industry over decades contributed to the 2017 fire
PHOTOGRAPH: RICK FINDLER/PA MEDIA



'Rotten culture': reckoning in construction sector over failures across supply chain

Julia Kollewe

After the damning findings of the public inquiry into the Grenfell Tower fire, the construction industry is facing a moment of reckoning.

The 2017 fire stemmed from a "rotten culture in the construction industry", where failures occurred across the supply chain, according to Dame Judith Hackitt, an engineer who led a review on building safety after Grenfell.

She said the inquiry report, which was published on Wednesday and chronicled failures in the construction industry, the council, regulators and central government, "provides all of the evidence and more to reinforce the messages that I gave about the state of that culture in the industry back in 2017".

She added: "This whole issue is about much more than cladding and insulation. It is about an industry that does not assure quality in the building of homes for people to live in, in the way that it should."

The 1,700-page report by Sir Martin Moore-Bick, the chair of the public inquiry, found a chain of failures over decades that ultimately contributed to the fire, including "systematic dishonesty" on the part of the makers of the cladding panels and insulation products - Arconic, Kingspan and Celotex. The architects Studio E, the builders Rydon and Harley Facades, and the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea's building control department all bore some responsibility for the blaze, the report said.

The findings laid bare some of the deeper structural issues at the heart of the construction industry - not least its highly fragmented, competitive

and blame-shifting nature. Operating on wafer-thin margins, contractors and subcontractors are interdependent while also trying to squeeze out their share of the profits.

The number of subcontractors on building sites has steadily risen since the 1980s, although specialist work has always been subcontracted to expert firms.

In her 2018 report, *Building a Safer Future*, Hackitt wrote of a "system failure" and condemned "the primary motivation ... to do things as quickly and cheaply as possible" in an industry driven by profit rather than safety. She also criticised confusion about roles and responsibilities at each stage.

The construction analyst Stephen Rawlinson, at Applied Value, said: "Always in the construction industry, you've got everybody looking at the other guy, saying: 'It's his fault,



▲ Dame Judith Hackitt, author of 2018 report *Building a Safer Future*



▲ Sir Martin Moore-Bick, chair of the Grenfell Tower public inquiry



▲ David Cameron was criticised in the report for pushing deregulation

right?' In the case of Grenfell, there seem to be some problems all the way along the line."

He added: "A lot of it goes back to the fact that people want a building as cheap as possible." Construction companies work on small operating margins (operating profit to revenue), of about 2% to 3% in contracting, which can influence behaviour.

"There is a remarkable lack of skills and knowledge in the industry since the 1980s as funding has been cut from industry training boards and training schemes," Rawlinson said. He also pointed to a wave of deregulation since the mid-1990s. Of the measures recommended by the report to make buildings safer, he said: "All this existed in the 1980s."

Moore-Bick's report condemned David Cameron's deregulation drive when he was prime minister. As for the regulators, the British Board of Agrément, which certifies construction products as safe, is described as "incompetent".

The Building Research Establishment, a former government national laboratory set up in 1921, tested products and issued safety certificates, but it was privatised in 1997 and the government limited its input on fire safety matters. Testing "is now more of a self-regulating environment", said Rawlinson.

The cladding materials and insulation in the walls of Grenfell Tower

proved to be highly flammable. The inquiry report said that the main companies involved – Arconic, Celotex, and Kingspan – had engaged in “deliberate and sustained strategies to manipulate the testing processes, misrepresent test data and mislead the market”. The companies pushed back against this.

At Grenfell, the architect, main contractor and cladding contractor were strongly criticised by the inquiry report. Studio E, a now-defunct architectural practice, “demonstrated a cavalier attitude to the regulations affecting fire safety” and did not recognise that the cladding was combustible.

The Grenfell disaster was one of a series of tower block fires, and by far the deadliest, coming after the 2009 Lakanal House fire where six people died, and the 1991 fire at Knowsley Heights in Liverpool.

The government set up a building safety fund in 2020, and housebuilders were asked to pay into it to fix fire safety problems with external cladding in high-rise towers over 18 metres across the country.

Hackitt said cutting corners “still remains the prevailing attitude in many places and until our procurement processes change to call for quality... that will continue”.

She said there were some promising signs of change, driven by the Building Safety Act 2022, and “we are starting to see some of the big players certainly take the lead” though “far too many are still dragging their feet”.

Hackitt added: “We need to be able to raise the bar and raise standards by recognising those who are doing the right thing whilst at the same time naming and shaming those who don’t.”

With the Labour government keen to kickstart a wave of housebuilding and demands to make existing homes far more energy efficient and less carbon-intensive, that drive to improve standards is all the more pressing.

The Construction Products Association, a trade body, said: “Whilst we recognise the very worst of the culture and practices reflected in the Grenfell tragedy, we see an industry that over the past seven years has been changing and has a desire to demonstrate that it can be trusted to deliver safe and high-quality buildings.”

The industry body has developed a code for construction product information to ensure they are marketed appropriately. It also noted that a formal British standard to improve the competence of those procuring, designing, constructing and inspecting buildings is nearing completion.

As a result of Hackitt’s 2018 review, two regulators were introduced: the building safety regulator and the Office for Product Safety and Standards. Now, there are calls for an overall regulator to ensure greater accountability.

Rico Wojtulewicz, head of policy and market insight at the National Federation of Builders, said: “When you read the Grenfell report, it’s obvious that there is a mismatch between building control, designers, contractors and others; what we really need to do is ensure that everybody knows who is accountable for what, and that is something that really needs to be firmed up.”

Denials of wrongdoing Fury from bereaved as firms respond to report

Robert Booth

Social affairs correspondent

The bereaved and survivors have expressed fury at the response of the three companies that supplied combustible materials to Grenfell Tower for its disastrous refurbishment ahead of the fire that killed 72 people in 2017.

While there were apologies from the UK government and the local council – who were also responsible for serious failings in the lead-up to the blaze – the companies issued lengthy denials of wrongdoing.

Here are excerpts from the report’s conclusions and what the companies said.



ARCONIC

Arconic (made the plastic-filled cladding panels that were the main cause of the fire’s spread)

The public inquiry found: The firms which made the cladding and insulation products – Arconic, Celotex and Kingspan – behaved with “systematic dishonesty” and “engaged in deliberate and sustained strategies to manipulate the testing processes, misrepresent test data and mislead the market”.

Arconic was “deliberately and dishonestly concealing from the market the true position in relation to Reynobond PE [the product sold for use on Grenfell] in cassette form”, and “Arconic itself must take responsibility for the use of Reynobond PE 55 on Grenfell Tower because it knew that the sale of the product had been obtained on the basis of the British Board of Agrément certificate which ... gave a misleading impression of the way in which the product in cassette form reacted to fire”.

Arconic said:

“Arconic Architectural Products [a subsidiary] sold sheets of aluminium composite material as specified in the design process. This product was safe to use as a building material, and legal to sell in the UK as well as more than 30 countries in which AAP customers purchased [it]. We reject any claim that AAP sold an unsafe product.

“AAP regularly conducted tests of its materials using third-party testing bodies. Reports on these results were all publicly available, and AAP made [them] available to its customers. AAP did not conceal information from or mislead any certification body, customer, or the public.”

‘[The firms] engaged in strategies to manipulate and misrepresent’

Part of the Grenfell report’s conclusions



Kingspan (made about 5% of the combustible foam insulation known as K15)

The public inquiry found: “The story of the development and marketing of K15 for use on buildings of over 18 metres in height between 2006 and 2019 is one of deeply entrenched and persistent dishonesty on the part of Kingspan in pursuit of commercial gain coupled with a complete disregard for fire safety.

“The effect of Kingspan’s dishonest marketing of K15 was to create a spurious market for a polymeric insulation product suitable for use on high-rise buildings generally, which drew in Celotex as a competitor.”

Kingspan said: “We welcome the publication of [the] report which is crucial to a public understanding of what went wrong and why. It explains clearly and unambiguously that the type of insulation (whether combustible or non-combustible) was immaterial, and that the principal reason for the fire spread was the PE ACM cladding, which was not made by Kingspan. Kingspan has long acknowledged the wholly unacceptable historical

failings that occurred in part of our UK insulation business. These were in no way reflective of how we conduct ourselves as a Group, then or now. While deeply regrettable, they were not found to be causative of the tragedy.

“Kingspan has emphatically addressed these issues, including the implementation of extensive and externally-verified measures to ensure our conduct and compliance standards are world leading. We remain committed to playing a leading role in providing safe and sustainable building solutions, including continuing to work with government and industry partners.”

Celotex

Celotex (made most of the combustible foam insulation)
The public inquiry found:

“Celotex embarked on a dishonest scheme to mislead its customers and the market” and “the dishonest and cynical way in which RS5000 [the insulation] was tested and marketed reflected a culture in Celotex stretching back to at least 2009”.
Celotex said:

“We conducted our own review to interrogate the circumstances in which the RS5000 product had been tested, launched and marketed. This was a significant and thorough undertaking, and the results of that were disclosed promptly and proactively to relevant stakeholders, including the Grenfell Tower Inquiry.

“Independent testing commissioned following the review demonstrated that the cladding system described in the Celotex RS5000 marketing literature met the relevant safety criteria. That system was substantially different to that used at Grenfell Tower. Decisions about design, construction and the selection of materials for the Tower were made by construction industry professionals.

“Since the fire, we reviewed and improved process controls, quality management and the approach to marketing within the Celotex business to meet industry best practice. Celotex Limited continues to cooperate fully with all official investigations into the Grenfell Tower fire.”

▼ Firefighters working on the middle floors after the blaze that consumed Grenfell Tower on 14 June 2017

PHOTOGRAPH: TOLGA AKMEN/AFP/GETTY



Social housing Landlords still treat tenants like children – ombudsman

Robert Booth

Some social housing landlords still treat tenants like children and behave in the same adversarial and defensive way as the Grenfell Tower landlord, the government-appointed social housing ombudsman has said.

Speaking in the wake of the public inquiry report into the 2017 fire that claimed 72 lives, Richard Blake-way warned leaders of social housing groups to end “parent-child” relationships with tenants and instead “see people, not problems”.

The damning inquiry into the causes of the disaster found that residents at Grenfell felt the Kensington & Chelsea Tenant Management Organisation (KCTMO) was “a bullying overlord” and that aspects of its response to the disaster showed “a marked lack of respect for human decency and dignity”. It treated residents who were raising concerns about the refurbishment that turned out to be well-founded as “militant troublemakers” and “lost sight” of the fact that residents “depended on it for a safe and decent home”.

However, lawyers for the bereaved and survivors have criticised the inquiry’s decision to avoid making recommendations to the government for reform. The inquiry panel judged that the establishment of a new social housing regulator last year created powers to set standards on competence and conduct of landlords. But that means that changing “the culture of disregard for tenants in social housing will be ignored” in any efforts to monitor the national response to the disaster.

“An inquiry which was about the experience of being a social housing tenant is effectively silent on safeguarding the experience of social tenants going forward so that the tenant’s voice is lost from the process,” said Caroline Brosnan, a lawyer at Russell-Cooke, which represented a group of the bereaved, survivors and residents at the seven-year inquiry.

Blakeway, who fields thousands of complaints from social housing tenants, said: “That resident-landlord relationship is something that sometimes I do see and it’s not isolated. I see positive examples of a healthier, open relationship, but I will absolutely see examples of where it’s become adversarial, defensive, and the landlord appears to be reluctant to recognise there are things it needs to improve.”

He spoke after the prime minister, Keir Starmer, told parliament the 1,700-page report laid bare the way the Grenfell residents had been treated as “second-class citizens”.

Angela Rayner, the deputy prime minister and housing secretary, said there was an “imbalance” and social tenants suffered from “stigma”.

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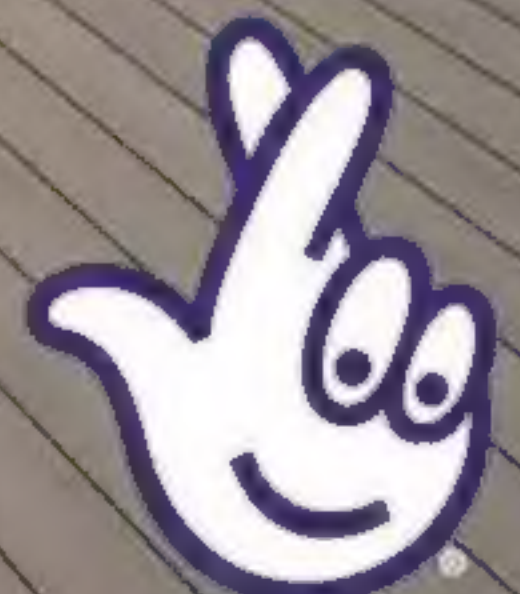
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▼ An Oasis mural near Heaton Park, Manchester. The Gallaghers said they had no input into ticket prices

PHOTOGRAPH: PAUL ELLIS/AFP/GETTY



Watchdog begins investigation into Ticketmaster's Oasis prices

Ben Quinn

The competition watchdog has launched an investigation into the Oasis ticket sales fiasco.

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) will investigate Ticketmaster's handling of sales for the band's 2025 tour, including how "dynamic pricing" may have been used to adjust the cost of tickets.

Initial excitement about the Gallagher brothers' reconciliation soon gave way to dismay and outrage last weekend after fans complained that the prices for the 18 shows were increased without warning. Some queued online for hours only to find that the price of £135 standing tickets had risen to £355.

The CMA had said on Tuesday it was "urgently reviewing" the use of dynamic pricing after criticism of the price inflation. The Gallaghers said on Wednesday that they had no input into how the tickets were priced.

The CMA's investigation will consider whether Ticketmaster engaged in unfair commercial practices and if clear and timely information was given to explain that the tickets could be subject to dynamic pricing.

It will also examine whether consumers were put under pressure to buy tickets within a short period of time, at a higher price than they understood they would have to pay.

New Wembley shows How will tickets be offered?

What are Oasis doing?

The two more gigs at Wembley in London, on 27 and 28 September, are a response to "unprecedented demand" in the initial sale that led to 10 million fans from 158 countries queueing online to try to snap up tickets.

The band took the opportunity in the latest announcement to distance themselves from the furore around seller Ticketmaster's dynamic pricing strategy. The band blamed promoters, Ticketmaster and their own management team, saying they "at no time had any awareness" of the selling strategy.

How can fans get tickets for the new dates?

The plan to take a "small step towards making amends for the situation" is to set up a "special, staggered, invitation-only ballot".

The Guardian understands the database of those who originally entered the first preorder ballot last Friday is being vetted to eliminate suspicious applicants such as bots. Verified fans who did not get a ticket in that ballot will be invited to try again. The sale will then be open to all other fans.

Oasis have not said if customers

who tried to buy on Saturday through Ticketmaster, See Tickets or Gigs and Tours will be entered into the special ballot.

The date for the launch of the ballot has not yet been revealed.

How many tickets will there be and how much will they cost?

It is expected that 180,000 tickets will go on sale over the two nights.

Prices have not been released but before Friday's presale promoters said standing tickets would cost about £150, with standard seated tickets from £73 to about £205. The band has yet to clarify whether pricing for the new dates will be dynamic.

Why have Oasis done this?

The furore has tarnished the band's image before the reunion tour, and Oasis admitted the experience had "failed to meet expectations".

The band said while it was "impossible" to schedule enough shows to fulfil demand, they wanted to make the buying process "smoother" and reduce the "stress and time" for fans to get tickets.

However, the commercial reality is that adding two new shows will be hugely lucrative. Mark Sweney

Fans are being asked to provide evidence on the CMA's website and to include any screenshots they may have taken during the buying process.

The authority said it would engage with Ticketmaster and gather evidence from other sources, which may include the band's management and event organisers.

The CMA chief executive, Sarah Cardell, said: "It's important that fans are treated fairly when they buy tickets, which is why we've launched this investigation."

"It's clear that many people felt they had a bad experience and were surprised by the price of their tickets at checkout."

"We want to hear from fans who went through the process and may have encountered issues so that we can investigate whether existing consumer protection law has been breached."

It should not be assumed that Ticketmaster had broken consumer protection law, the CMA stressed.

The review was welcomed by the prime minister, Keir Starmer, according to his spokesman, who said that No 10 would await its conclusions.

"Ticketing platforms should be transparent with customers over how they price their tickets so people can make informed decisions," said a Downing Street spokesman.

A spokesperson for Ticketmaster said: "We are committed to cooperating with the CMA and look forward to sharing more facts about the ticket sale with them."

The company has previously defended its dynamic pricing model and said it did not set any ticket prices. The firm has argued that the system is designed to discourage ticket touts by setting prices closer to market value.

Budget Asda teabag comes out top in blind taste test for UK's best brew

Sammy Gecsoyler

The battle for the nation's best brew is usually a face-off between the usual big-brand suspects. But this year, a supermarket own-brand teabag has come out on top.

Asda's Everyday teabags were crowned the best cuppa of 2024 by the consumer group Which?. The budget brew, which costs £1.20 for 80 bags, achieved the top score of 72% in a blind tasting by 79 "experienced and committed" tea drinkers.

The testers noted the brew's aroma and appearance, with 68% judging the colour "perfect" and 49% finding the flavour to be "just right". It was also the cheapest tea tested, with each bag coming in at 1.5p.

At the other end of the scale, the high-end Twinings Everyday came joint-last with a score of 67%. At £4.80 for 80 bags, Twinings teabags cost four times the price of Asda's, with each bag setting back tea drinkers 6p. While more than 60% of tasters liked the colour and bitterness level of the Twinings brew, fewer than half were satisfied with the flavour.

PG Tips Original (£3 for 80 bags) was a close joint-second on 71%, with 68% of testers judging the colour to be "just how a cup of tea should look", while a similar proportion were satisfied with the level of bitterness.

Tetley Original (£2.50 for 80 bags) also scored 71%, with tasters judging the tea to look good while offering a "pleasant mouthfeel" and an enticing aroma, with 54% agreeing it had strength of flavour. However, 27% said it was too bitter.

Sainsbury's Red Label, which costs £1.25 for 80 bags, was the third product to achieve a score of 71%, scoring well on colour, aroma and mouthfeel. It was the second highest scoring supermarket own-brand tea tested.

Four brands received a score of 70% - Aldi's Diplomat Red Label (£1.85 for 160 bags), Co-op's 99 Blend Fair-trade Tea (£1.45 for 80 bags), Waitrose Essential Original Blend (£1.25 per 80 bags) and Taylors of Harrogate Yorkshire Tea (£3.30 for 80 bags).

Tied at the bottom of the table with Twinings Everyday was Tesco's Original Tea. While two-thirds of the panel enjoyed its bitterness, 35% said it was too dark and 34% considered it not to be strong enough.



▲ Asda's Everyday teabags, which cost £1.20 for 80 bags, scored 72%

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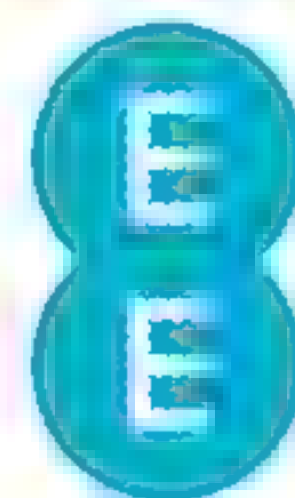
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Ofcom to assess scrapping of Saturday second-class letter deliveries in review

Kalyeena Makortoff

Royal Mail could be allowed to scrap second-class letter deliveries on Saturdays, amid pressure from the company on the industry regulator to shake up postal service rules.

The UK communications regulator, Ofcom, said it would “assess” whether certain changes to second-class letter delivery would meet postal users’ needs, before a formal consultation due early next year.

It is part of the watchdog’s wider review of the universal service obligation (USO), the remit held by Royal Mail to deliver nationwide at one price six days a week.

“The evidence we have gathered so far also suggests people want

a next-day service available six days a week for when they need to send the occasional urgent letter or card,” Ofcom said. “However, people acknowledge that most letters are not urgent.”

Ofcom said if second-class letters continued to be delivered within three working days, but not on Saturdays, it would enable Royal Mail to “improve reliability, make substantial efficiency savings, and redeploy its existing resources to growth areas such as parcels”.

The watchdog is not proposing any changes to first-class deliveries at Royal Mail, which is in the process of being bought by the Czech billionaire Daniel Křetínský.

Royal Mail has been urging changes to the system amid declining letter volumes and increased competition in

the parcels industry. It began lobbying for reform four years ago. Last year, the government rejected its request to drop Saturday deliveries.

Ofcom has previously estimated that the cost of delivering the USO is between £325m and £675m a year. It has forecast that reducing the number of delivery days could cut costs by up to £650m.

Royal Mail has asked the regulator to let it reduce deliveries of second-class letters to just two or three days a week, cutting nearly 1,000 jobs and saving £300m a year in the process.

£650m

Ofcom’s estimate of savings from reducing the number of delivery days for second-class letters

It proposed paring back the daily Monday-to-Saturday second-class service to “every other weekday”.

Yesterday, Ofcom said it would carry out further in-depth research among postal users to explore whether this option met their needs.

Royal Mail delivered less than 80% of first-class post on time in the three months to 30 June and only 94.1% of second-class post on time.

Ofcom insisted its proposals would not be a “free pass for Royal Mail”: “Under any scenario, it must invest in its network, become more efficient and improve its service levels.”

Martin Seidenberg, the chief executive of the Royal Mail owner, International Distribution Services, said: “Letter volumes have fallen from their peak of 20bn to just 6.7bn a year today meaning the average

household now receives just four letters a week. Yet whilst most countries have adapted their universal service requirements to reflect the new reality, in the UK the minimum requirements have not changed.

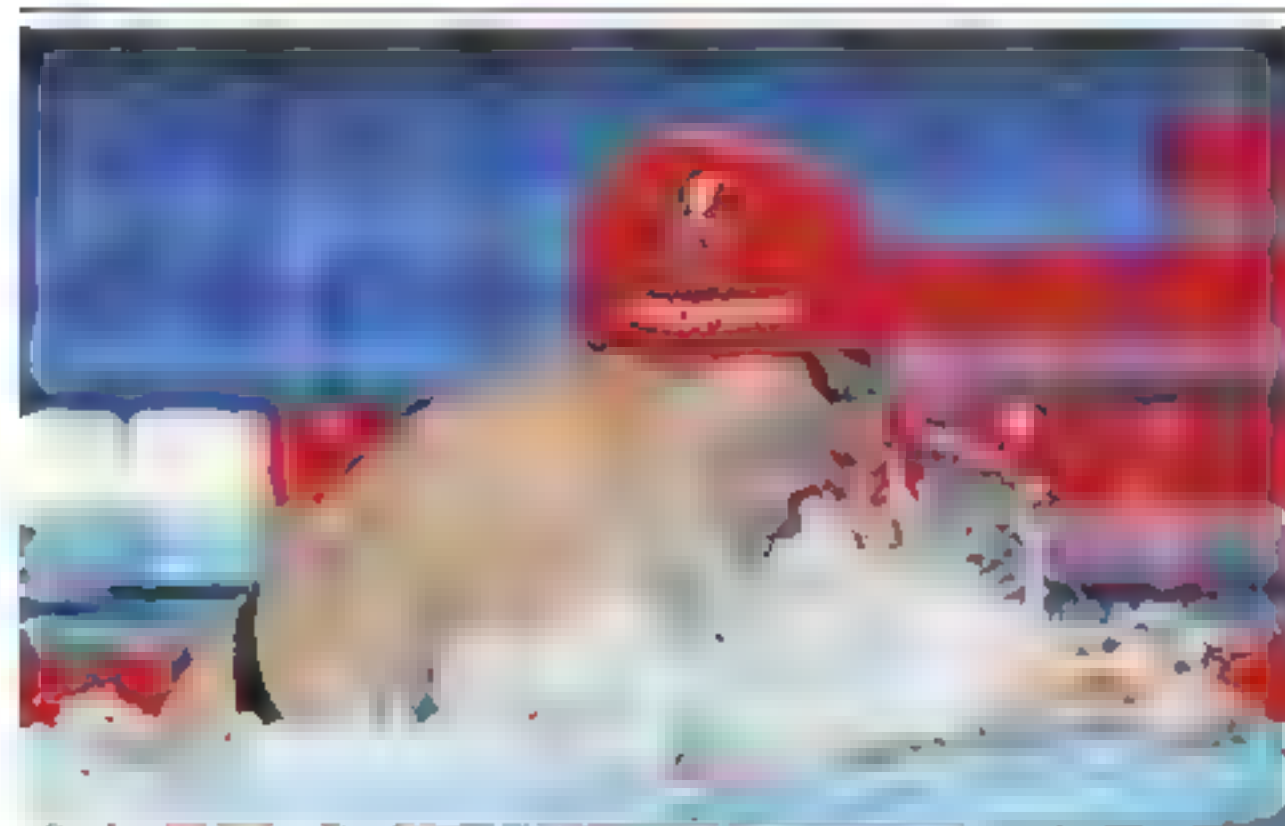
“The universal service faces a very real and urgent financial sustainability challenge. Change cannot come soon enough.”

Tom MacInnes, the interim director of policy at Citizens Advice, said: “With Royal Mail failing to meet its targets for nearly half a decade, the current USO clearly doesn’t protect consumers as it should.”

“Reforms to the USO need to address this. They can’t just be a disguise for cuts that prioritise saving Royal Mail money over providing a good standard of service. We agree improving reliability and affordability is essential. But cutting deliveries won’t automatically lead to the more reliable service people need.”

Publishers and small businesses have voiced concerns over the proposed overhaul of the postal system, and warned against potential “panicked” cuts.

Nils Pratley Page 35 →



▲ Rebecca Redfern of Team GB on her way to winning the SB13 100m breaststroke PHOTOGRAPH: JEREMY LEE/REUTERS

Kinghorn soaks up Paris atmosphere on way to medals glory

Paul MacInnes

Stade de France, Paris

Sammi Kinghorn made it four medals from four events at the Paralympics last night and credited her success in Paris to “making sure that I was the happiest person” as she prepared to take on the world.

The fastest British woman ever to race in a wheelchair, Kinghorn has competed at three Paralympics but this has been her breakthrough summer. Her fourth medal, a third silver, came here in the T53 400m race, just a day after winning gold and setting a Paralympics record in the 100m. She was joined in track and field success by Dan Pembroke, who retained his F13 javelin title with a world record throw of 74.49m.

“I was just buzzing to get out there again and enjoy that crowd,” Kinghorn said of her approach to the 400m, where she finished behind her Swiss rival Catherine Debrunner in a time of 53.45 seconds.

“As I’ve gotten older, I’ve started to

understand that the medals aren’t the things that make you happy. Before I always thought, if I win a Paralympic medal, I’ll be the happiest person ever. Then I came away from Tokyo with a medal and it hadn’t made me any happier. So I really worked on making sure that I was the happiest person going into these Games.

“I think I’m learning more and more about myself, and who I am, and who I want to be as a person,” she said.

“I think it’s probably the first time I can say I’ve enjoyed competing. Normally I really don’t. I enjoy it when I cross the line and I’m done, but [this time] coming out into that stadium each day, I’ve soaked it up.”

The Scot will now finally be able to celebrate her achievements, with the chief focus a trip to Singapore to watch the Formula One grand prix. Already a presenter on BBC One’s Countryfile, she says she also hopes to further diversify her career after the Games. “I didn’t grow up wanting to be a sportsperson, it is that thing of trying to find who am I as a whole,”

she said. “TV-wise, I think I could listen to anyone talk about something they’re passionate about, even if it was a stick.”

Kinghorn was born on a farm in the Borders and suffered life-changing injuries at the age of 14 when she was crushed by a forklift truck.

As a presenter Kinghorn has seen the problems for disabled people who want access to the countryside. And she joined the chorus of Paralympics heroes, including Tanni Grey-Thompson and Sarah Storey, who have used the spotlight to call for increased accessibility.

“I live in Cheshire and there’s loads of beautiful walks, but they’re all kissing gates. And I can’t go anywhere,” she said. “If I could change anything, I would love to be able to go across a field. I’ve got a FreeWheel, I can modify my chair to do it, but I can’t get through the kissing gate.”

Pembroke broke the world record twice during his javelin contest, the second an enormous 3m 34 increase on the first. He was cheered on wholeheartedly by the Parisian crowd and



▲ Sammi Kinghorn celebrates her silver medal in the T53 400m wheelchair race in Paris last night

PHOTOGRAPH: THOMAS MUKOYA/REUTERS

athlete, Pembroke suffered deteriorating vision in his 20s due to retinitis pigmentosa. He said he has been practising visualisation work in his training which helped him push through the competition but also that he had spoken to Kinghorn, who had shared her enjoyment-first mantra.

Elsewhere at the Games yesterday, Rebecca Redfern and Alice Tai added golds on a very successful evening for Great Britain’s swimmers.

Tai won gold in women’s S8 50m freestyle – her second gold of the Games, and the third of her career – powering through the field to take the title comfortably ahead of Brazil’s Cecilia Kethlen Jerônimo de Araújo.

Tai, who underwent an amputation on her right leg in January 2022 after missing Tokyo due to an elbow injury, was victorious in 29.91 seconds. The 25-year-old, who won S8 100m backstroke gold on Saturday, was 40 seconds clear of the Brazilian silver medallist.

“I knew it was going to be a close race and I thought someone might duck under 30 [seconds], but I didn’t think it would be me,” she said.

“My starts have been affected since my amputation so this was a shot in the dark, I don’t have that power off the start any more.”

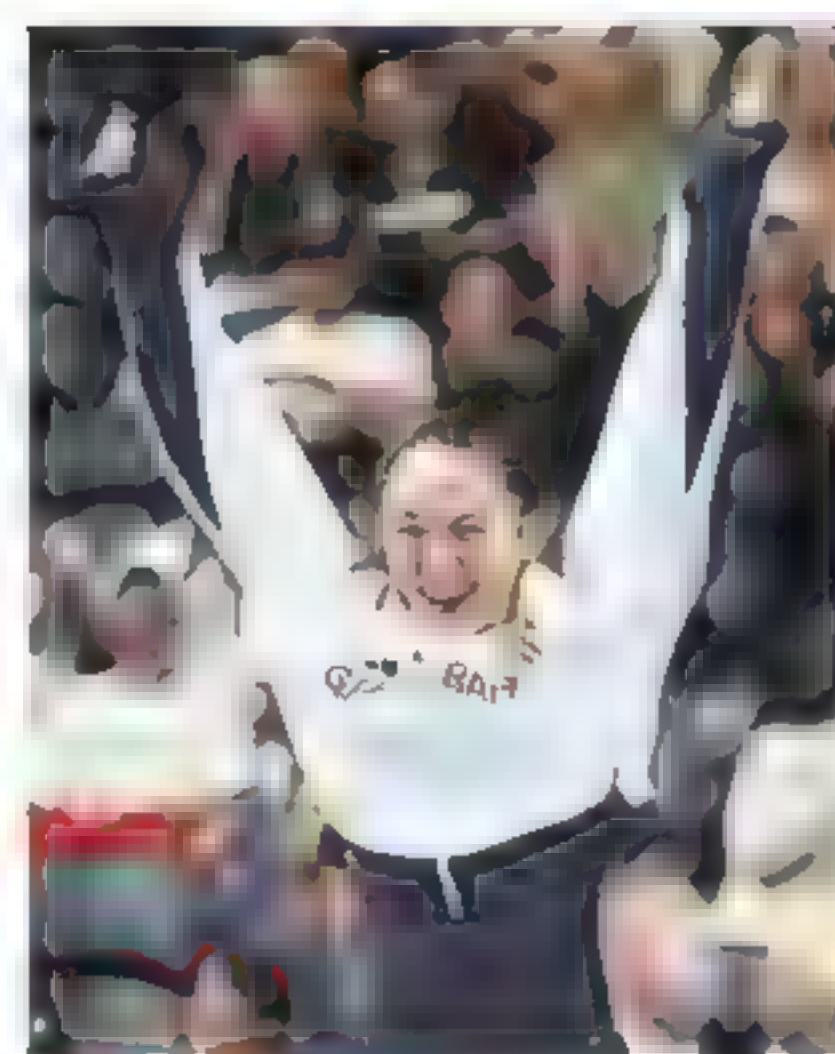
“I didn’t know I’d won until the girl next to me told me, I couldn’t see.”

Redfern took the SB13 100m breaststroke crown, having won silvers in the event at Rio 2016 and Tokyo 2020.

She finished comfortably ahead of American pair Olivia Chambers and Colleen Young in a time of one minute 16.02 seconds, having led from about 35 metres, to end her wait for glory.

“To win two silvers at my first two Paralympics and now gold, it means the world,” said the 24-year-old.

“It feels really surreal. We’ve had a hell of a journey to get here.”



▲ Alice Tai won the S8 50m freestyle for the UK, her second gold in Paris

the 33-year-old said he had been overwhelmed by the experience.

“That was phenomenal,” he said. “I’ve never had anything like that ever before in my life. The crowd just got behind me and that was my secret weapon.”

A former non-disabled javelin

Sport Paralympics Pages 37-38 →

Associate of Lynch hit by car died from head injury, inquest hears

Geneva Abdul

Stephen Chamberlain, an associate of the tech tycoon Mike Lynch, died in hospital three days after being hit by a car while out running in Cambridgeshire, an inquest has heard.

Chamberlain was hit on 17 August when he was about six miles into his run, having set out from the city of Ely that morning. The 52-year-old was the former vice-president of finance at the British software firm



▲ Stephen Chamberlain was out running when the accident occurred

Autonomy and a co-defendant with Lynch in a US fraud trial over the sale of Autonomy to Hewlett-Packard in 2011 for \$11bn (then £7bn).

A car driven by a 49-year-old woman from Haddenham hit Chamberlain at about 10.10am. His medical cause of death was recorded as traumatic head injury.

At the inquest in Alconbury, the coroner, Caroline Jones, said: "A vehicle travelling between Stretham and Wicken on the A1123 crested a humpback bridge and was presented with a runner crossing the road from

the nearside to the offside between two parts of a bridleway."

Chamberlain was taken to Addenbrooke's hospital in Cambridge where he died on 20 August. The hearing was adjourned pending the outcome of the police investigation and any possible prosecutions.

The inquest comes after Lynch and six other people onboard the Bayesian yacht died when it sank off the coast of Sicily on 19 August.

In June, Lynch and Chamberlain were cleared of US fraud charges that could have resulted in years in jail.

Suffocation was likely cause of death for two passengers on Bayesian

Lorenzo Tondo
Palermo

Two of the people who died on the British tech tycoon Mike Lynch's yacht, which capsized and sank off the coast of Sicily in August, reportedly died from asphyxiation when they ran out of oxygen in the cabins.

A source close to the investigation told the Guardian that Chris Morvillo, a lawyer at Clifford Chance, and his wife, Neda, "did not have water in their lungs, trachea and stomach".

The source, who described their deaths as "death by confinement", confirmed the version provided by the firefighters' divers and the coastguard, who had stated that the passengers trapped in the cabins had probably tried to breathe the oxygen in an air bubble that had formed as the boat sank.

Despite clear evidence from initial examinations, the source added: "The results are still provisional, as histological exams on samples taken from the bodies will be needed to ascertain the cause of death."

The superyacht Bayesian sank off the coast of Porticello, a fishing village near Palermo, when the area was hit by violent storms. Seven people died, including Lynch and his 18-year-old daughter, Hannah.

Fifteen people survived, including Lynch's wife, whose company owned the Bayesian. It is thought it was struck by a downburst, a gusty wind associated with storms.

Italian prosecutors have placed three crew members under investigation for manslaughter and shipwreck, including the captain of the yacht, James Cutfield, 51, from New Zealand. Being investigated in Italy does not imply guilt and does not mean formal charges will follow.

The bodies were found "in the highest part of the ship, as it was clear people were trying to hide in cabins on the left-hand side", the local fire rescue service said. The ship landed on its right-hand side after it sank to a depth of about 50 metres.

Officials believe the passengers sought escape routes, reaching the opposite side of the vessel.

The space to breathe shrank quickly as water flooded the rooms and the air bubble became increasingly unbreathable owing to the rise in carbon dioxide.

The body of Recaldo Thomas, the onboard cook, was found in the water near the vessel. Five of the victims were reportedly found in different rooms from those indicated by survivors.

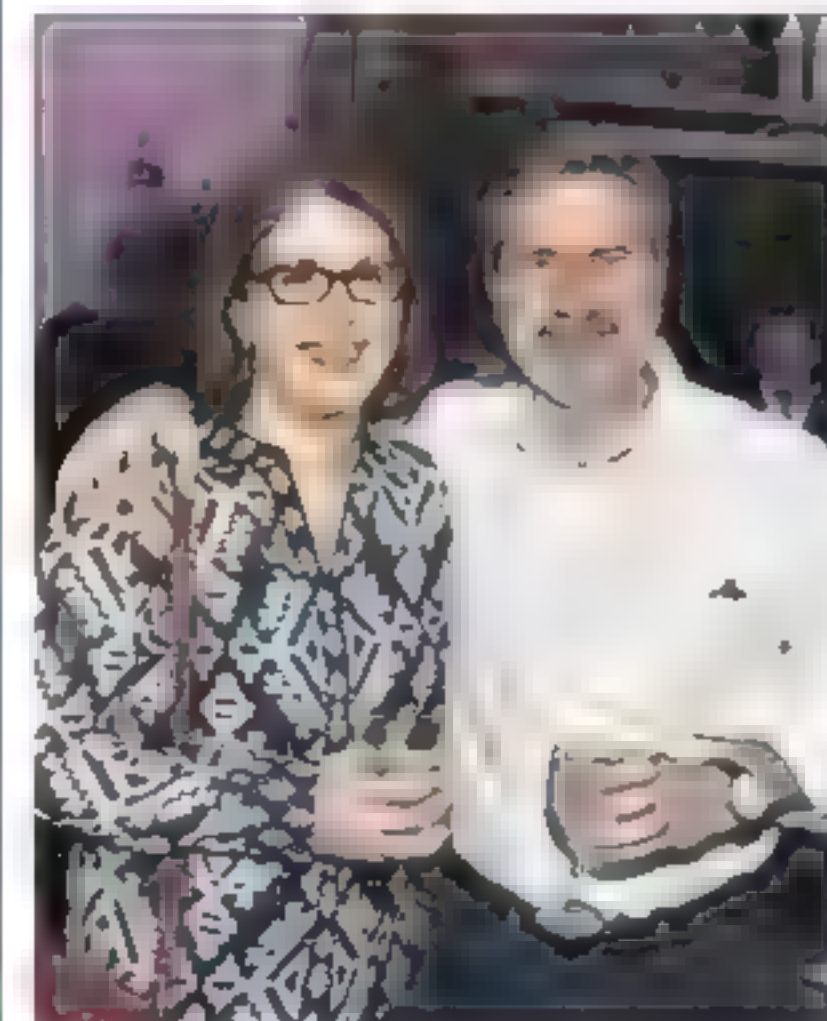
According to the newspaper La Repubblica, Morgan Stanley International's chair, Jonathan Bloomer, and his wife, Judy, are also believed to have died from suffocation, with the results of their autopsies reportedly identical to those of the Morvillos. The Guardian cannot independently verify the information regarding the Bloomers.

The head forensic doctor at the Policlinico hospital in Palermo, who is carrying out autopsies on the bodies of the victims, declined to comment.

Autopsies were expected on the bodies of Mike and Hannah Lynch yesterday, while investigators were due to begin a technical assessment on the sunken yacht to verify whether a hatch had been open, which could have led to its sinking.

The prosecutor's office has been examining videos and photographs taken by local people on the night of the storm, as well as surveillance camera footage. In recent weeks the coastguard has visited all homes and public places with surveillance cameras.

Italian officials said it would be difficult to investigate the sinking fully unless the wreck was recovered.



▲ Neda and Chris Morvillo are said to have died from asphyxiation

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Specsavers

Royal Navy member killed after helicopter crashes in Channel

Dan Sabbagh

Defence and security editor

A member of the Royal Navy has died after a Merlin Mk4 helicopter crashed in the Channel off the coast of Dorset during a night-flying exercise.

Two other crew members were

rescued after the crash, which took place during training with the aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth.

The victim has not been named but their family has been informed.

Keir Starmer said yesterday he was "deeply saddened to hear of the tragic death of a member of the Royal Navy". The prime minister added

that his "thoughts are with the family and loved ones during this painful time" and he paid tribute to those involved in the rescue operation.

The Merlin Mk4 helicopter is used by elite special forces and the Royal Marines. Its modifications include a special fast-roping beam "that allows the rapid deployment of special forces" from the main cabin door.

It is understood the Merlin was taking part in a test flying exercise, routine practice after the Queen Elizabeth left port this week. The aircraft carrier had completed a period of

upgrade and repair to its starboard propeller shaft.

The recovery of the helicopter from the sea bed is expected to be "a longer process", naval sources said.

In a statement, the navy said: "It is with great sadness that we must report a member of the Royal Navy has died following a training incident last night. Our thoughts are with the family - who have been informed - and all those affected at this sad time. A full investigation will take place."

"The incident involved a Merlin Mk4 helicopter in the Channel near

Dorset that ditched while conducting night-flying exercises with HMS Queen Elizabeth. There were no other fatalities or serious injuries."

John Healey, the defence secretary, described the incident as "dreadful news". An investigation led by the Defence Safety Authority through the Defence Accident Investigation Branch will take place, its finding independent of the Royal Navy.

A commando helicopter force, based at RNAS Yeovilton in Somerset, operates 25 Merlin Mk4/4as to be deployed at short notice.



▲ When scientists established Stonehenge's altar stone came from northern Scotland, many assumed Orkney was its origin PHOTOGRAPH: MATT CARDY/GETTY

Mystery of Stonehenge stone origin 'gets weirder'

Esther Addley

The plot has thickened in the mystery of the altar stone of Stonehenge, weeks after geologists revealed that the huge Neolithic boulder had been transported hundreds of miles to Wiltshire from the north of Scotland.

That discovery, described as "jaw-dropping" by one of the scientists involved, established definitively that the 6-tonne megalith had not been brought from Wales, as had long been believed, but came from sandstone deposits in an area encompassing the isles of Orkney and Shetland and a thin coastal strip on the north-east Scottish mainland.

Many experts assumed that the most likely place of origin was Orkney, based on the islands' rich Neolithic culture and tradition of monument-building.

But a separate academic study has now found that Orkney is not, in fact, the source of the altar stone - meaning the tantalising hunt for its place of origin goes on.

The new study, conducted separately from last month's Australian-led paper but involving some of the same scientists, examined the chemical and mineralogical makeup of the stones from Orkney's two great stone circles, the Stones of Stenness and the Ring of Brodgar, as well as

multiple field samples of rock deposits across the Orkney islands.

When key markers, identified in portable X-rays, were compared with the altar stone they were found to be strikingly different, leading the authors to conclude that the islands could not be the source of the megalith.

Richard Bevens, an honorary professor of geography at the University of Aberystwyth and the report's lead author, said Orkney had seemed "the obvious place to look" once initial research some years ago had pointed away from Wales to an unknown location in northern Britain.

Extensive evidence exists of long-distance communications between Orkney and Stonehenge around 3000BC, and a number of key innovations in technology and culture are believed to have originated in the archipelago.

"Everybody and their dog would have said: 'Let's try Orkney first. It's going to be Orkney,'" agreed the co-author Rob Ixer at University College London. Certainly, he said, "The more we learn [about Stonehenge], the weirder it gets."

Ruling out Orkney so quickly could help narrow the search in other areas of old red sandstone, said Bevens, who added he was "optimistic" that the specific source of the boulder would one day be identified. "The Orcadian basin [the area from which the altar stone originated] is quite a big area, so I wouldn't say it will be found quickly. What I would say it is, it is achievable."

The archaeologist Alison Sheridan, who was not involved in the research, said the new findings were "an intriguing additional twist to the tale," adding: "As with many things from Stonehenge, nothing is ever straightforward."

The study is published in the Journal of Archaeological Science.

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SONY MUSIC

YouTube to stop pushing videos on physical ideals at teenagers

Dan Milmo
Global technology editor

YouTube is to stop recommending videos to teenagers that idealise specific fitness levels, body weights or physical features, after experts warned such content could

be harmful if viewed repeatedly. The platform will still allow 13- to 17-year-olds to view the videos, but its algorithms will not push young users down related content “rabbit holes” afterwards.

YouTube said such content did not breach its guidelines but that repeated viewing of it could affect the

wellbeing of some users. YouTube’s global head of health, Dr Garth Graham, said: “As a teen is developing thoughts about who they are and their own standards for themselves, repeated consumption of content featuring idealised standards that starts to shape an unrealistic internal standard could lead some to form negative beliefs about themselves.”

YouTube said experts on its youth and families advisory committee had said certain categories that may be “innocuous” as a single video could be “problematic” if viewed repeatedly.

The new guidelines apply to content that idealises some physical features over others, such as beauty routines to make your nose look slimmer; idealises fitness or body weights, such as exercise routines that encourage pursuing a certain look; or encourages social aggression, such as physical intimidation.

YouTube will no longer make repeated recommendations of those topics to teenagers who have registered their age with the platform as logged-in users.

In the UK, the newly introduced

Online Safety Act requires tech companies to protect children from harmful content and consider how their algorithms may expose under-18s to damaging material.

Sonia Livingstone, a professor of social psychology at the London School of Economics, said a recent report by the Children’s Society charity underlined the importance of tackling social media’s impact on self-esteem. A survey in the Good Childhood report showed that nearly one in four girls in the UK were dissatisfied with their appearance.

Universities ‘need 35% tuition fee increase to break even’

Richard Adams
Education editor

Student tuition fees in England would need to rise to £12,500 a year for universities to break even, according to analysis presented to vice-chancellors.

But higher education leaders attending the Universities UK (UUK) annual conference were told they would look “out of touch” if they asked for a 35% increase in undergraduate fees from the current level of £9,250, with a UUK taskforce likely to recommend a smaller increase.

Shitij Kapur, the vice-chancellor of King’s College London, said the last time universities in England broke even on undergraduate teaching costs was 2015-16, when tuition fees were £9,000, which would translate into £12,000-£13,000 today after adjusting for inflation.

Kapur said that while £12,500 a year might be the “right number” to reflect the real cost of an undergraduate degree, he said it was unrealistic to expect the government or public to agree.

“If we suddenly say we’ll go from

£9,250 to £12,500, might we seem so out of touch and clueless that we would lose?” said Kapur.

The debate over tuition fees comes as a number of universities are under severe financial strain, with rising costs such as staff salaries. The Conservative government raised the cap on fees in England to £9,000 a year in 2012 but the level has been frozen at £9,250 since 2017.

Kapur, a member of UUK’s “blue-print commission” working on funding and regulation, said its draft proposal was for an increase in funding “somewhere in between” £9,250 and £12,500, paid for by a mixture of higher tuition fees indexed to inflation, rising to £9,600 in 2025-26, and an increase in teaching grants by government.

“The issue is not the evidence. The issue is the headline ask,” Kapur said.

A UUK spokesperson said: “If investment in teaching had kept up with inflation, funding per student would be in the region of £12,000-£13,000. To be clear, we are not calling for tuition fees to rise to this level. In fact, more and more of the burden is falling on graduates, and the UK is increasingly an outlier within the OECD on this.”

“Our new research out today shows the significant benefits to the Treasury generated by graduates, and we believe it is time for a rebalancing of responsibility for funding to recognise that.”

According to research published by UUK, only 16% of the cost of a degree was paid by the government, while 84% fell to graduates. It also calculates that every £1 spent by the government generates a further £14 in graduates’ economic activity.

Bridget Phillipson, the education secretary, told delegates via video that there were “no easy answers or quick fixes” to the funding question.

“I can’t promise painless or immediate resolutions but I do promise that these issues will get the attention and the commitment they deserve,” said Phillipson.

David Willetts, the former Conservative universities minister who is also a member of the UUK commission, said he believed the new government was prepared to agree a deal with universities in England for higher funding.

“There’s genuine anxiety in government about universities going bust,” he said, adding: “Students are getting a very raw deal. Setting aside financial crisis, it’s just gradually eroding the quality of the student experience – lectures become more crowded, labs are less well equipped with up-to-date kit. Those are ways in which the education of the next generation are suffering.”



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£9,250

The current cap on tuition fees for UK and Irish students in England. Fees have been frozen since 2017

16%

The proportion of a degree paid for by the government, while 84% falls to graduates, according to UUK

Boy, 14, to be tried for murder over park death

Hannah Al-Othman

A 14-year-old boy will go on trial next year after being charged with the murder of an 80-year-old man who

was assaulted while walking his dog in his local park in Braunstone Town, Leicestershire, on Sunday evening.

The teenager, who cannot be identified because of his age, was charged by police on Wednesday, and appeared at Leicester crown court yesterday afternoon.

Judge Harbage KC adjourned the case for a plea hearing to take place on 11 October at the same court. The boy was remanded in custody, with a provisional trial date set for 17 February.

Four other children – a girl aged 14 and one boy and two girls aged 12

– were arrested on suspicion of murder, but were released.

Leicestershire police said a post-mortem examination had found that Kohli died as a result of a neck injury, pending further tests.

His family described him as “a loving, caring person” in a statement released by police. “He was always very happy and talkative, the joker of the family,” they said.

Leicestershire police said they had made a referral to the Independent Office for Police Conduct owing to prior contact with the victim.

Leeds indie band English Teacher win Mercury prize with debut album

Laura Snapes

The Leeds indie band English Teacher have won the Mercury prize for their debut album, *This Could Be Texas*, a result that left them almost lost for words at the ceremony at the historic Abbey Road studios last night.

Formed in 2020, the four-piece formed at Leeds Conservatoire and signed to Island records to release their first album. Speaking as the award was announced, the band's frontwoman, Lily Fontaine, said: “We didn't really plan this far. We just thought we'd make a band. What do we do now?”

In a 9/10 review for the website the Line of Best Fit, critic Kieran Macadie

said the band set themselves apart from their post-punk peers, many of whom hail from south London, thanks to their “northern charm”.

Last night they paid tribute to members of the Leeds music community including Nathan Clark, owner of the Brudenell Music Social Club venue. They take home a prize of £25,000.

The Mercury was “set to celebrate the album as an artistic format in its own right”, DJ Jamz Supernova said when presenting the award. In a statement, the judges said the album stood out for its originality and character.

This Could Be Texas was praised for “a winning lyrical mix of surrealism and social observation, alongside a subtle way of wearing its musical innovations lightly, displays a fresh

Critic's view Quirky, clever – and natural



The members of Leeds quartet English Teacher looked understandably startled to have won the 2024 Mercury Prize: the bookies – who invariably go for the most commercially successful album – thought it would be Charli xcx, the smart money was probably on Corinne Bailey Rae's *Black Rainbows*.

It's a long time since an alt-rock band won the prize but you can see why the judges were charmed by *This Could Be Texas*.

In a world of heavy-handed sermonising, the lyrics deal with serious topics – racism, inequality, mental health, penury – with a light touch that is sharp, smart and funny in equal measure.

You can detect the faint ghost of The Fall in the surrealism and caustic wit of *The World's Biggest Paving Slab* or *Nearly Daffodils*. The music, meanwhile, seems to delight in continually throwing the listener curveballs: the melodies twist and turn in unexpected ways, there are proggy shifts in time signature, a folky bent co-exists with electronica, garage-rock guitar riffs, what seems to be a dub-influenced sense of space.

It can be straightforwardly emotive – as on the break-up song *You Blister My Paint* – or it can make you laugh. Perhaps most importantly, it never feels like it's going out of its way to be quirky or clever: its strangeness feels natural, rather than trying too hard.

It takes nothing away from the album's quality to suggest that whoever won would be

overshadowed by the question of the Mercury Prize's future. It no longer has a sponsor, necessitating scaling back of the live awards to what co-presenter Annie Mac tactfully described as “an intimate celebration of this year's shortlist”.

Media coverage has dwindled, although – at risk of sounding waspish – not quite as dramatically as public interest seems to have done; even the days when the Mercury was the subject of constant criticism are a distant memory. An award that was set up specifically to sell albums at a traditionally quiet time of year, it no longer has much impact on sales. Last year's winners Ezra Collective saw their album, *Where I'm Meant To Be*, propelled to No 30 for a week, before vanishing from the charts again.

One reason why the prize feels diminished might involve the changes wrought by streaming. It's put a vastly larger and more diverse array of music at people's fingertips and music consumption has become more atomised and personal. It's a climate in which the kind of cast-iron authority the Mercury has always purported to wield over musical worth looks shakier than ever. And accordingly, no one seems that bothered.

You can't argue with the quality of this year's winner, just as you couldn't really argue with the quality of indeed any of the recent Mercury victors. But under the circumstances, it's hard not to wonder whether *This Could Be Texas* could be remembered as the last Mercury winner of all.

Alexis Petridis

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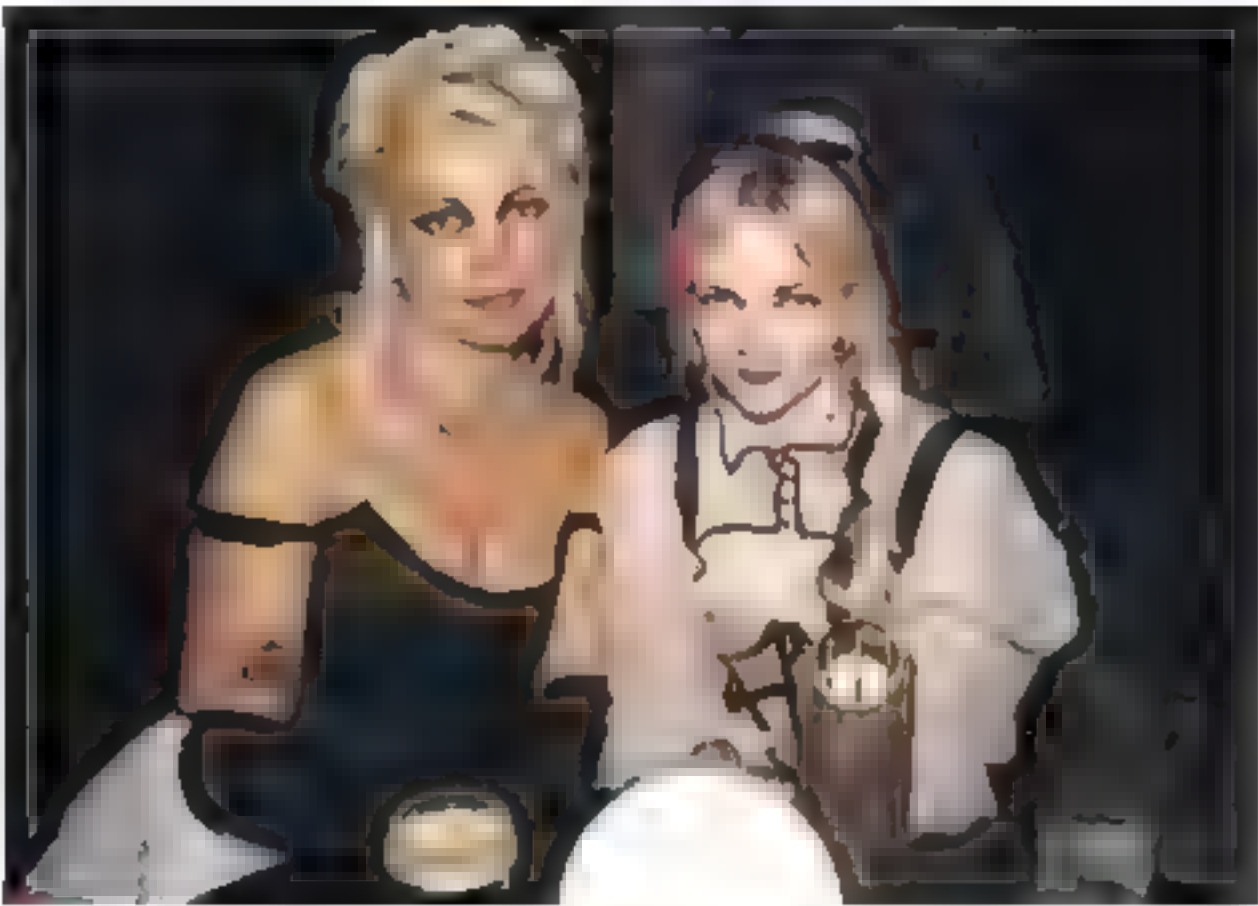
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▼ Douglas Frost, Lily Fontaine, Nicholas Eden and Lewis Whiting, of English Teacher, receive their award
PHOTOGRAPH: JMENTERNATIONAL/GETTY IMAGES



▲ Georgia Davies and Emily Roberts of The Last Dinner Party at the Abbey Road studios event last night

alongside being on Universal Credit, living at home or sofa surfing,” said Fontaine.

This year’s ceremony was held in straitened circumstances after the Mercury’s partnership with the taxi company Freenow ended last year. This year’s prize failed to find a new sponsor so the usual live event – in which each nominated act would have performed live – was a stripped-back affair broadcast from Abbey Road studios, presented by the BBC radio presenters Huw Stephens and Annie Mac, in which the acts watched footage of each others’ prior appearances on the BBC.

“Despite efforts to match up with a suitable new partner, in what is clearly a tough arts funding environment, we weren’t able to secure one within the timeframe and the level

of funding required,” the BPI chief executive Jo Twist told Music Week recently. “With no sponsor, we unfortunately aren’t in a position to put on a live show this year to the high production values and standards we hold ourselves to.”

This year’s prize featured four second-time nominees – Charli xcx, the rapper Berwyn, songwriter Corinne Bailey Rae and rapper Ghetts – and eight first-time nominees: the jungle producer Nia Archives, indie-pop songwriter CMAT, the songwriter Cat Burns, dance producer Barry Can’t Swim, the baroque-poppers the Last Dinner Party, composer corto.alto – and de facto first-time nominee Beth Gibbons, who won as a member of Portishead in 1995 for their debut album, Dummy.

Twist described the Mercury’s remit in 2024 as “ultimately about starting a national conversation about great albums and artists telling their stories through the medium”.

This year’s judges were the broadcaster and writer Danielle Perry; musician and Radio 2 presenter Jamie Cullum; DJ and BBC 6 Music presenter Jamz Supernova; BBC Radio 2 and 6 Music head of music Jeff Smith; music programming consultant Lea Stonhill; broadcaster, songwriter and DJ MistaJam; BBC Radio 1 presenter and DJ Sian Eleri; and the journalists Will Hodgkinson, Sophie Williams and Phil Alexander.

The reality is that it's normal for these achievements to coexist with being on universal credit

Lily Fontaine
Singer, English Teacher

approach to the traditional guitar band format. It reveals new depths on every listen – a future classic.”

English Teacher’s win is arguably a surprise: Charli xcx’s Brat was odds-on favourite to win, having dominated the summer to the point of influencing the US presidential election. Yet Charli xcx herself was not at the ceremony, with her co-producers AG Cook and Easyfun (AKA Finn Keane) there on her behalf.

This week, English Teacher announced that they were scrapping their upcoming US tour “for health reasons”. They previously told the Guardian about the challenges of making a living even as a relatively acclaimed act signed to a major label who have performed on Later ... With Jools Holland and receive regular BBC 6 Music airplay.

“The reality is that it’s normal for all of these achievements to coexist



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Jenrick leads fundraising for Tory leadership contenders

Rowena Mason
Whitehall editor

Robert Jenrick is outgunning his Conservative leadership rivals with big donors after raking in £250,000 by the end of last month, while some other candidates are still short of the

fundraising target required to stay in the race.

Jenrick raised a quarter of a million pounds by the end of August, as his nearest competitor, Kemi Badenoch, reached about £200,000.

Under the party's "pay to play" rules, those who make it to the final four on Tuesday next week will have

to hand over £50,000 to the party. The two candidates who make it to the final round after the party's conference in October will have to pay a further £150,000 to Tory HQ.

The other three candidates were lagging behind Jenrick and Badenoch in fundraising by the end of August, with James Cleverly bringing in just below £100,000, Tom Tugendhat £70,000, and Mel Stride £30,000.

Tugendhat got £44,500 from a company called Blue WV, which was set up in November last year and is controlled by the former No



£250,000

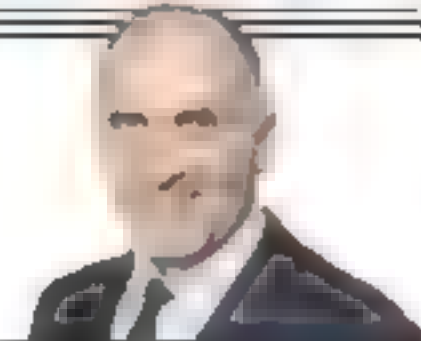
Amount raised by Robert Jenrick by the end of August, ahead of Kemi Badenoch on about £200,000

10 special adviser Guy Miscampbell. Tugendhat's team did not respond to questions about what the company does and whether Miscampbell is the ultimate source of the money.

The Conservative party has placed a big emphasis on the ability of candidates to raise funds after being left with little money after the election.

Jenrick's donors include a firm owned by the wife of the former Conservative MP Nadhim Zahawi, which contributed £20,000, and a company controlled by Mark Dembovsky, a former CEO of Doughty Chambers.

Sketch
John Crace



Even after their near-death experience, the Tories retreat into their bunker of weirdness

After more than a decade of Tory governments, many of us had become inured to the chaos. Incompetence, stupidity, corruption and narcissism were a steady background noise.

So it's something of a surprise to find that just a few days into the autumn term not much appears to be going on in Westminster. No sound, no fury. Just people quietly going about their business. So much so that now even the Tories have come to think that the Tories are a bit weird.

Weirdness is the Tories' current USP. You might have thought the near-death experience at the election would have jolted at least some of them back to reality. Instead they retreated into their own bunker.

So the leadership contenders continue to do weird. Yesterday lunchtime, Priti Patel could be found striding down the corridors of parliament with a face like thunder. Still unable to believe that in a sextet of deadbeats, she was the deadest beat of all.

The first to be knocked out of the leadership contest. She should have been amazed that as many as 14 Tory MPs voted for her. Who are these people who reckon the Prittster was fit to lead? Hell, we're not even talking about her serial breaches of the ministerial code.

Priti Patel could be found striding the corridors with a face like thunder, unable to believe she was the deadest beat of all

We're talking about her abject uselessness.

Still, one person was pleased to see her go. Robert Jenrick reckons he is the one most likely to Hoover up the 14 votes going spare. Honest Bob's hot take was that Priti Vacant's first-round exit was a sign that her mission to change the party was the nation's prime objective. Er, hello. Earth to Bob. Earth to Bob. You do know that she lost. That rather means her rightwing agenda was rejected.

It also seems that some of the weirdness has rubbed off on the Lords. Some of whom are up in arms that Labour are planning to get rid of all 92 hereditary peers. Hardly unreasonable as there is bound to be a fudge, allowing a handful of the able – breathing – hereditaries to sneak back in as life peers. Only in the UK could someone be allowed to become a peer twice over with no loss of hereditary benefits. Never say that the establishment doesn't look after its own.

But Lord Strathclyde was apoplectic yesterday, insisting that the government was completely out of order. It just wasn't on to think of forcibly retiring 92 white Tory men. The very idea. This just wasn't cricket. What would their lordships do now? And it was outrageous that Labour were trying to appoint more of their own chums. It was always thus. Fine for a Tory government to have as many Tory peers as it likes. That's the way of the world. Just not the other way round.

Obviously there was no sign of David Cameron in the chamber. Lord Big Dave is choosing to lie low. Very wise. It goes without saying that he will come away untouched from the Grenfell fire report. Even though it was his bonfire of red tape that paved the way for a laissez-faire approach to safety in social housing. Eric Pickles was just his useful idiot.

Dawn calls her favourite son, a lot.

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CPS drops indecent assault case against Weinstein

Ben Quinn

Prosecutors in the UK have discontinued two indecent assault charges against the disgraced Hollywood film producer Harvey Weinstein. The Metropolitan police charged Weinstein two years ago with two counts of indecent assault against a woman, in her 50s at the time of the announcement of the charges, in London in 1996. However, the Crown Prosecution

Service (CPS) said yesterday it was discontinuing the charges after a review found there was no longer “a realistic prospect of conviction”. “We would always encourage any potential victims of sexual assault to come forward and report to police and we will prosecute wherever our legal test is met,” said Frank Ferguson, the head of the CPS’s special crime and counter terrorism division. The news was greeted with dismay by Lysette Anthony, a British actor who was one of dozens to have made allegations against Weinstein.

“It has cost so much to so many women who have come forward and we have had every reason to hope for the best,” said Anthony, who has said she told the Met police she was attacked by Weinstein in her London home in the late 1980s. The sex offender, who co-founded the independent film distribution and production company Miramax, had a spectacular fall from grace in October 2017 when the New York Times published a story detailing decades of allegations of sexual harassment against him.

After a trial in New York in 2020, he was sentenced to 23 years in prison for rape and sexual assault. He was also sentenced in February last year to 16 years in prison for the 2013 rape of an actor in Los Angeles. He is appealing against that conviction. In April New York’s top court overturned Weinstein’s 2020 convictions and found he should face a new trial. He is currently in custody in Riker’s Island jail, New York. Ferguson said: “Following a review the CPS has decided there is no longer a realistic prospect of conviction.”



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◀ Rebecca Cheptegei in action during the women’s marathon at the World Athletics Championships in Budapest in August 2023
PHOTOGRAPH: DYLAN MARTINEZ, REUTERS

Ugandan athlete dies in Kenya after ex-partner allegedly set her on fire

Carlos Mureithi
East Africa correspondent

The family of a Ugandan athlete who died in Kenya after allegedly being set on fire by her former boyfriend has called for justice and legal action. “I have a lot of grief because I’ve lost my daughter. I seek your help so that this person who has killed my daughter can be prosecuted,” Joseph Cheptegei, the father of Rebecca Cheptegei, told reporters at the hospital where she died. Cheptegei, a long-distance runner who took part in the 2024 Paris Olympics, was in intensive care after her former boyfriend, Dickson Marangach, allegedly doused her with petrol at her house in western Kenya and set her on fire, causing more than 80% burns. The incident happened on Sunday afternoon in Endebess, a town in Trans-Nzoia county, police said. Before the incident, the pair had been heard fighting over the land on which the house lies, according to a report filed by the area chief. Marangach suffered less severe burns in the incident. Both were treated at the Moi teaching and referral hospital in the city of Eldoret. Cheptegei died as a result of multiple organ failure, Dr Kimani Mbugua, a consultant at the hospital, told journalists. “Most of her systems actually failed following the burns,” he said. “The damage had already occurred by the time she was coming in. So we supported the organs as best as we could. But unfortunately, it was beyond what we could do.” Cheptegei, 33, was part of the 25-member Ugandan team in Paris, where she finished 44th in the women’s marathon. She qualified for the

Olympics after recording a personal best of 2hr 22min 47sec in the 2022 Abu Dhabi marathon. Her death has been met with shock in her home country, Uganda, and in Kenya, where she trained. Uganda’s sports minister, Peter Ogwang, called her death “tragic”, while the country’s first lady, Janet Museveni, said the news was “deeply disturbing”. Cheptegei’s death has refocused attention on violence against female athletes and women in general in Kenya. In October 2021, the Kenyan long-distance runner Agnes Tirop was stabbed to death at her home in Iten town in Elgeyo-Marakwet county. The following year, Damaris Mutua, a Kenyan-born Bahraini athlete, was found dead at her boyfriend’s home in the same town. A postmortem found that she had been strangled. In 2022 a survey found that 34% of girls and women in Kenya aged 15 to 49 had experienced physical violence since they were aged 15. Donald Rukare, president of the Uganda Olympic Committee, said: “May her gentle soul rest in peace, and we strongly condemn violence against women. This was a cowardly and senseless act that has led to the loss of a great athlete.” Cheptegei leaves behind two daughters.



▲ Rebecca Cheptegei’s grieving mother, Agnes, speaking in Eldoret

Eyewitness



▲ The blind soul singer Ray Charles plays on a specially adapted board
BILL RAY/LIFE PICTURE COLLECTION/
SHUTTERSTOCK

▼ Husband and wife Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall relax over a game in the 1940s
EVERETT COLLECTION/ALAMY





In black and white

The links between chess and culture are documented in *Chess Players*, published by FUEL, in the year that Fide, the International Chess Federation, celebrates its 100th anniversary.



▲ The cast look on as John Wayne plays chess on the set of *Howard Hawks' Rio Bravo* (1959)
PHOTO 12/ALAMY

◀ Playing behind bars in Attica prison, New York state, in 1972
CORNELL CAPA/INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY/MAGNUM PHOTOS

▼ The artist Marcel Duchamp plays chess on a sheet of glass in 1958
ALBUM/ALAMY

◀ Che Guevara takes part in an international tournament. He was a keen player and popularised the game in Cuba
PHOTOGRAPH-KEYSTONE/GETTY



▶ The disco star Donna Summer plays her companion Ron Williams in 1969
MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY/KEYSTONE/ZUMAPRESS



Families of Letby's victims call for CCTV on neonatal wards

Hannah Al-Othman

North of England correspondent

Families of some of Lucy Letby's victims are calling for CCTV on neonatal wards, tighter control of insulin in hospitals and more protections for NHS whistleblowers before a "vitally important" public inquiry next week, a lawyer representing them has said.

The Thirlwall inquiry, which starts on Tuesday, has been set up to examine what happened at the Countess of Chester hospital, where Letby worked. She has been convicted of murdering seven babies and attempting to murder seven more while based there as a neonatal nurse.

It later emerged that consultants had repeatedly raised concerns that Letby may have been behind a series of unexplained deaths.

Among the issues the inquiry will consider are the experiences of the parents of Letby's victims. It will also look at the conduct of hospital staff and consider whether suspicions should have been raised earlier, whether Letby should have been suspended earlier and whether police should have been brought in sooner.

The inquiry will examine wider NHS culture, and consider the effectiveness of its management and governance structures. Chaired by the senior court of appeal judge Lady Justice Thirlwall, it is expected to last about four months, with a report released next year.

Tamlin Bolton from Switalskis solicitors, representing six of the affected families, said yesterday that the inquiry was "vitally important".

"Lucy Letby killed and harmed more children than any other serial

killer," Bolton said. "She had the longest criminal trial in England and Wales. How you cannot listen to the concerns expressed by the consultants on the neonatal unit, following that criminal trial and that verdict, must be investigated, and this is absolutely the forum in which to do it."

She said the families she represents are "looking for transparency, accountability, and that there are recommendations ... that it won't happen again in the future. Or that if it does, there's a mechanism, a really robust system in place, so that people can escalate concerns about staff members without being worried about losing their jobs, that they won't try to be silenced."

Among some of the specific requests that the families have put forward, she said, are for CCTV to be installed on neonatal wards, and

that drugs "that can cause potential harm to patients" are more tightly controlled within hospitals.

The previous government, which announced the inquiry, said it would be statutory, meaning it can force witnesses to give evidence and can order the release of documents.

Although the families involved have already been through lengthy criminal trials, Bolton said they were entering the inquiry process feeling hopeful "that the evidence that's given will answer a lot of outstanding questions for them, hopeful that there will be some accountability at the end, that people will stand up and say: 'I should have done this. I should have done this differently.'"

Bolton also said speculation about Letby's conviction was having an obvious impact on the families of her victims. "Those who've had sight of the full remit of evidence, the jurors and the court of appeal have all maintained her guilt, and that anything outside of that, where you haven't read, seen or heard all of the evidence, is just speculation," she said.

"And we would encourage people to look at the court of appeal judgment, and really consider it properly."

Rare moth thought to be extinct is discovered in Norfolk village

Patrick Barkham

The Norfolk snout was always a rare moth in Britain. By the late 1960s, populations of this small beige moth with a distinctive protuberant "nose" had dwindled to just one site – a working quarry in north-west Norfolk.

Years of bad weather or possibly overcollecting by a few zealots meant that the moth, which has a 20mm wingspan, became extinct in Britain in 1971.

Now, after an absence of more than 50 years, the Norfolk snout (*Nothris verbascella*) has reappeared, close to where it was first discovered in 1853.

One of the moths was caught this week in a humane moth trap set in the garden of Dave and Pauline Jones in Stoke Holy Cross, a village four miles south of Norwich.

They were at first mystified by the identity of this diminutive, rather dull-looking moth with distinctive curled "horns" on its palps – a pair of hairy appendages on the front of the head that help moths identify their food sources.

But experts, including Steve Palmer, who specialises in identifying similarly small moths belonging to the *Gelechiidae* family, have since confirmed their identification.

Caterpillars of the Norfolk snout eat hoary mullein, a tall plant with yellow flowers that is nationally scarce but fairly common south of Norwich, where the moth was rediscovered.

It is not known if the moth, which is found across Europe, has recolonised from mainland Europe or has simply been living unobserved in tiny populations in Norfolk for more than five decades.

The moth expert James Lowen said it could have survived undetected for years. "It's really exciting," Lowen said of its reappearance. "My hunch is that it has been here undetected."

"It tends to stick around its food plant, hoary mullein, which is seen by roadsides south of Norwich, and it doesn't wander far."

"It's a small brown moth and people don't tend to look at small brown moths. Dave and Pauline Jones deserve a lot of credit for looking at it critically."

Decluttering Tidiness trends can cause stress, say experts

Amelia Hill

One week it's an airport security tray filled with carefully tessellated items that represent the owner's personality, the next it's a curated fridge shelf decorated with fairy lights and flowers. But is this the acme – or the nadir – of the organising cult?

According to some, the trend has gone too far. We are cluttering our mental landscape with our decluttering schemes, say the experts – and when the Association of Professional Declutterers and Organisers tells you to put down the duster, you know you've been spoken to.

"The constant need to keep up with these decluttering and organisational trends is causing genuine mental and physical stress," says Siân Pelleschi, the APDO president. "People are losing the ability, in some cases, to distinguish between a fad and a method that can benefit their life. They're experiencing overwhelm and feelings of hopelessness thanks to all these different organisational trends and methods."

So concerned is the APDO by our increasingly extreme striving for a



▲ Airport tray curated by Piper Taich on TikTok. Experts say the trend for extreme tidiness leads to more stress

PHOTOGRAPH: @PIPERTAICH/TIKTOK

minimalist, well-ordered exterior in the hope that it will lead to total inner happiness that it is devoting its National Organising Week to the theme "back to basics".

"Our goal is to reduce pressure on people to achieve perfection by emphasising progress," Pelleschi says. "We want to highlight the importance of focusing on basic needs and functions rather than aesthetic appeal."

Decluttering and organising existed long before the Netflix series *Tidying Up With Marie Kondo* made it a trend in 2019. But it has now reached unparalleled intensity. The TikTok hashtag #cleantok has more than 110.4bn views. Never before have

household perfectionists removed so many things from packages only to put them in other packages.

The team behind the new Clean & Tidy Home Show at ExCeL London say the increase in passion for tidiness has been exponential.

"Our event is a cleaning event and, while that might sound dull to some people, attendance has almost tripled in the three years we've been going, from 6,000 to an expected 16,000 this year," says Michael Rossi, the show manager.

Interest in the event is stoked throughout the year by its Shine Squad of cleaning and tidying influencers, who have 9.5 million online followers between them.

"When I walk round the event I see joy on people's faces," Rossi says. "It's a very depressing world we live in, and if organising a fridge gives you pleasure then go for it."

But Cassandra Jay, a psychologist

and founder of Empowered Life Planning, which specialises in organisation for busy women, says the plethora of extreme methods for simplifying our lives is causing more stress than joy and creativity.

She says: "The pressure to get rid of our possessions and hone it down to one perfectly colour-coordinated airport box leads to burnout – and also people pretending this is what they've achieved and who they are, which leads to more stress."

Chris Wootton, the owner of the Poppies Cleaning franchise, who has seen thousands of fridges over the past 44 years, questions the authenticity of the photos.

"While organised fridges offer benefits like reduced food waste, the time and resources required to maintain such excessive order are often impractical for most people," he says.



The Norfolk snout was last seen in Britain in 1971



◀ Adrien Brody, centre, stars as László Tóth, an Holocaust survivor, alongside Isaach de Bankolé, right, and Guy Pearce. The movie asks its audience to consider the many meanings of brutalism

PHOTOGRAPH
VENICE FILM FESTIVAL

Film review Epic tale of the construction of modern America will leave audiences dizzy

The Brutalist
Venice film festival
★★★★★

Peter Bradshaw

Brady Corbet's amazing and engrossing epic is about the design of postwar America and what was mixed into its foundations at the building stage. It asks us to decide if and how the brutalism of the title applies to something other than architecture, and wonders about the future ruin of what we all imagine at the drawing board of youth: an American Ozymandias.

It is about antisemitism and the capitalist adventure, about the unassimilated immigrant

experience, and about American can-do naivety versus the tragic, painful depths of European culture and expertise.

This is a film with thrilling directness and storytelling force, a movie that fills its widescreen and three-and-a-half-hour running time with absolute certainty and ease, as well as glorious amplitude, clarity and even simplicity – and yet also with something darkly mysterious and uncanny to be divined in its handsome shape.

It feels as if it must be based on a real-life case, or at least a literary source – but this is an original screenplay by Corbet and his co-screenwriter, Mona Fastvold. It is the biopic of an imaginary Hungarian architect and Holocaust survivor, László Tóth, who comes to the US in poverty after the second world war but revives his distinguished career with the

impulsive, eccentric patronage of a wealthy man with the WASP-presidential name of Van Buren.

This is a bluff patrician fellow who has the good taste and imagination to recognise Tóth's gifts but finally demonstrates a dark side in his bigotry, violence and envious shame at his own mediocrity.

Tóth is played with angular fierceness and passion by Adrien Brody: a career best for him, surely, and an advance on his performance in Roman Polanski's *The Pianist*. His wife, Erzsébet (Felicity Jones), and orphaned niece Zsófia (Raffey Cassidy) are marooned in Europe, caught in a bureaucratic muddle.

Tóth's breezily prosperous cousin Attila (Alessandro Nivola) offers Tóth a job in his Philadelphia furniture store but his American Catholic wife is fatefully to take against Tóth. His only male friend

is Gordon (played with dignity and restraint by Isaach de Bankolé), a widower, military veteran and single dad who Tóth meets in the bread line.

And Harrison Van Buren is wonderfully played by Guy Pearce with rich tailoring, face whiskers and a plummy, booming tone born



Alessandro Nivola, left, plays Tóth's cousin

of an addiction to madeira. From the very first, there is something ominous in the half-starved European artist's encounter with the plump American plutocrat, perhaps in his encounter with the US itself.

When Tóth staggers up from the hold of his immigrant ship to get his first ecstatic look at the Statue of Liberty, he is dazed, woozy, and the statue looms disturbingly upside down (like the upside-down shots in Corbet's comparable Euro-American parable *The Childhood of a Leader*).

Tóth gets a job remodelling the library at Van Buren's palatial estate – though Van Buren knows nothing about it; the job was commissioned as a birthday surprise while he was away by his bumptious and slippery son Harry (Joe Alwyn).

Tóth is thrilled by the possibilities in the library's high ceilings and its overhead atrial light-source, forms that appear to inspire his work for the rest of his career, though it is only at the very end that we discover what the actual inspiration is.

Van Buren Sr is initially furious at his idiot son presuming to get these scruffy foreigners to rebuild his library behind his back but then decides he is delighted by the bold, modernist reimagining that makes the library look larger than it is.

So he offers Tóth a king's ransom (and also uses his political contacts to get Erzsébet and Zsófia into the US) so that Tóth can mastermind the building of a vast community centre in the town in memory of his late mother. But Tóth's haughty perfectionism, quick temper and his problems with drink and drugs make the project an ordeal.

The *Brutalist* obviously takes something from Ayn Rand, but also from Bernard Malamud and Saul Bellow in its depiction of the US immigrant adventure and the promise of success – but maybe Corbet and Fastvold go further and faster into how dizzyingly sensual and sexual it all is. The film shows us the violence and the savagery – not the same as "brutalism" – that go with capitalist failure and success, with Van Buren Sr (and perhaps Jr) guilty of rape.

It is an electrifying piece of work, stunningly shot by cinematographer Lol Crawley and superbly designed by Judy Becker. I emerged from this movie light-headed and euphoric, dizzy with rubbernecking at its monumental vastness.

Fyre festival founder says event will return despite burnt bridges

Sammy Gecsoyler

It was the festival disaster that gripped the world, a modern-day Lord of the Flies with Instagram influencers instead of schoolchildren.

Nonetheless, the return of the infamous Fyre festival is still on, though it remains uncertain when or where it will be – or who may be performing.



▲ Founder Billy McFarland, centre, spent four years in prison for fraud

Plans to reboot it were announced last summer, but it was feared history might have been repeating itself when no updates were issued.

But the event's co-founder, Billy McFarland, has insisted it is still happening. And tickets have already been sold, with prices from \$499 (£379) to \$7,999 (£6,070).

McFarland said his associates were considering locations in Honduras, Belize, Turks and Caicos, Jamaica and Panama. While Blink-182 and Migos were billed as headliners for the first festival, acts and events for Fyre II are still being considered. "Karate combat on the beach, I think that would be amazing," McFarland said. "Having

some extreme sports, having some comedy and some fashion."

McFarland said people would be "hard-pressed" to trust him if his second go at Fyre festival failed. "It's going to be very hard to get other opportunities, whether that's a marketing job, a podcast appearance, a TV show or a relationship," he added.

The original event was co-founded by McFarland and the rapper Ja Rule and scheduled to take place in the Bahamas in 2017. It caused more than \$26m in losses when it was cancelled over inadequate accommodation, food and water. Guests had been promised Instagram-worthy experiences, opulent accommodation and

deluxe food, with tickets costing up to \$12,780. But when they arrived, they found a rain-sodden campsite and emergency tents used for disaster relief. There was no running water or electricity, and artists including Blink-182 pulled out of performing.

Ja Rule was cleared of wrongdoing in 2019, a year after McFarland was jailed after pleading guilty to numerous fraud charges relating to the festival. After his release in 2022, McFarland began planning a second Fyre, which he said he devised during a stint in solitary confinement. He told his followers on social media: "This is everything I've been working towards. Let's fucking go."

World

French woman's 'world fell apart' when told of rapes by men invited by her husband

Angelique Chrisafis
Paris

A French woman whose husband has admitted to drugging her and inviting more than 80 men to rape her over the course of a decade has said she "was sacrificed on the altar of vice" and treated "like a rag doll".

Gisèle Pélécot, 72, said: "Police saved my life" when they investigated her husband Dominique Pélécot's computer in November 2020, after a security guard caught him filming up the skirts of women in a supermarket near their home in a village in southern France.

Police said they found a file labelled "abuses" on a USB drive connected to his computer that contained 20,000 images and films of his wife being raped almost 100 times.

Recounting the moment in November 2020 when police first showed her images of a decade of sexual abuse orchestrated by her husband, Pélécot, who had been drugged to the point of unconsciousness, told the court: "My world fell apart. For me, everything was falling apart. Everything I had built up over 50 years."

She said she had barely recognised herself in the images uncovered by police, saying she was motionless. "I was sacrificed on the altar of vice. They regarded me like a rag doll, like a garbage bag."

"When you see that woman drugged, mistreated, a dead person on a bed – of course the body is not cold, it's warm, but it's as if I'm dead." She told the court rape was not a strong enough word, it was torture.

She told a panel of five judges that she had only found the courage to watch the footage in May this year.



▲ A court illustration of Dominique Pélécot, who could face 20 years in jail

"Frankly, these are scenes of horror for me," she said.

Referred to by her first name in court, Gisèle Pélécot has waived her right to anonymity in order for the trial to be held in public, with the support of her three adult children.

She said she was testifying "for all women" who had been assaulted while drugged and to ensure "no woman suffers this".

Her husband this week answered "yes" in court when asked if he was guilty of the drugging and attacks. His lawyer said that after his arrest he had "always declared himself guilty", saying: "I put her to sleep, I offered her, and I filmed."

Police have said that between 2011 and 2020, Dominique Pélécot crushed sleeping tablets and anti-anxiety medication and mixed them into his wife's evening meal or in her wine at their home in Mazan, near Carpentras in Provence. He then enlisted men to rape and sexually abuse her, contacting them via an online chatroom.

▼ Gisèle Pélécot listens as her lawyer, Stéphane Babonneau, addresses media outside the court in Avignon

PHOTOGRAPH: CHRISTOPHE SIMON/AFP/GETTY

Fifty men are on trial for allegedly taking part in the rape and abuse.

Speaking in a calm and clear voice, Gisèle Pélécot told the court she and her husband had married when they were 21, had three children and seven grandchildren, and had been very close. "We weren't rich but we were happy. Even our friends said we were the ideal couple," she said.

She told the court that without knowing she was being regularly drugged at night, she had begun to have difficulties remembering things and concentrating. She said she had lost weight and at one point had difficulty controlling her arm.

Worried she was suffering from Alzheimer's disease, she discussed the subject with her husband. She said he had supported her and booked an appointment with a specialist, who said it wasn't Alzheimer's.

Asked if she had experienced gynaecological issues, Gisèle Pélécot said yes. She said medical tests during the police investigation showed she had been infected with several sexually transmitted diseases.

She said after being told by police what had happened to her she felt like dying. She described how she had to explain the trauma to her adult children, saying her daughter's scream "was etched into my memory".

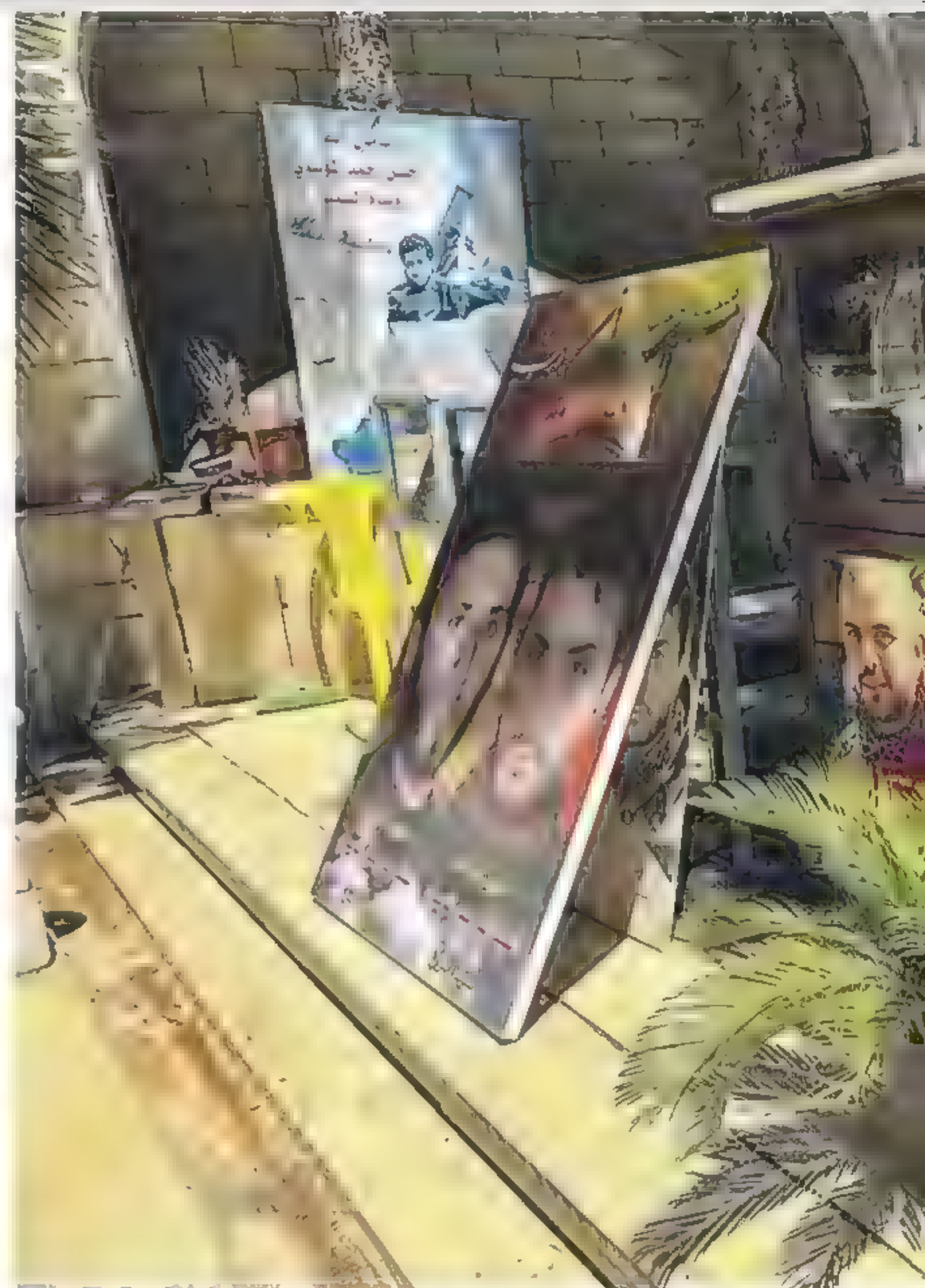
Gisèle Pélécot, who has been supported by her children, has been praised by lawyers for her strength and calm at the trial. She said she appeared solid but was "in ruins" and did not know how her body had withstood the abuse and now the trial.

The 50 men on trial with her husband include a local councillor, nurses, a journalist, a former police officer, a prison guard, soldier, firefighter and civil servant, many of whom lived around Mazan. The men were aged between 26 and 73 at the time of their arrests.

Several of the accused have denied the charges, saying they did not know Gisèle Pélécot was not a willing partner and accusing her husband of tricking them. Detectives were unable to identify and trace more than 30 other men who were recorded.

The trial in Avignon is expected to last four months. Dominique Pélécot, 71, and the 50 other defendants face 20 years in prison if convicted of aggravated rape.

Gisèle Pélécot said she had recognised only one of her alleged rapists, a man who had come to discuss cycling with her husband at their home. "I saw him now and then in the bakery. I would say hello. I never thought he'd come and raped me," she said.



Beqaa valley Hezbollah stronghold in Lebanon becomes an Israeli target

Simona Foltyn
Bekaa valley, Lebanon

On a recent morning near the town of Nabi Chit in Lebanon's eastern Bekaa region, a dozen men were clearing away debris. Israeli jets had thundered through the valley a week earlier, the second such raid in three days. The explosions lit up the night sky and filled the air with the smell of dust and gunpowder.

"They hit Nabi Chit because our village is the mother of the resistance," said Mohammed al-Moussawi, an ardent supporter of Hezbollah, the Shia militant group, political party and social movement known here as the resistance. He stood on the ground-floor terrace of his house in front of rubble and a twisted metal awning. The windows were blown out, the facade pockmarked with shrapnel.

A next-door neighbour was killed in the strikes. His own grandson, Hussain, was among the 20 injured after shattered glass cut his face. "He is four years old and already understands that Israel is the enemy who violates Arab land. What do you think he will be when he grows up?" Moussawi said.

The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) declined to comment on the casualties, but in an earlier statement said fighter jets had targeted a weapons depot and air defence system on 21 August, causing secondary explosions. Hezbollah, local authorities and witnesses insisted there had been a direct hit on civilian homes.

While Lebanon's southern villages have borne the brunt of cross-border fire in a thus far limited war of attrition, the recent strikes on the Bekaa could signal a widening of the war to the east.



'Life still goes on here'
Fashion week returns
to war-struck Kyiv
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Pernod Ricard row
U-turn after Marseille
fans decry PSG deal
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▲ At the back of the shrine for Abbas al-Moussawi, a co-founder of Hezbollah, are the graves of fighters
PHOTOGRAPH SIMONA FOLTYN

The valley is known for its fertile soil, wineries and Roman temples, which until recently drew tourists. But as the region's faultlines risk tearing open, another aspect of the Bekaa's history is taking centre stage. Called the "reservoir of the resistance", it is Hezbollah's bastion of support and a depository for weaponry along a strategic



'[Israel] hit Nabi Chit because our village is the mother of the resistance'
Mohammed al-Moussawi
Hezbollah supporter, Nabi Chit

corridor that connects Hezbollah to allies in Syria, Iraq and Iran. "We consider the south to be the first line of defence for Lebanon, and we in the Bekaa are the second line of defence," said Hassan al-Moussawi, the head of Nabi Chit's Hezbollah-run municipality (Moussawi is one of the most common names in Nabi Chit, and there are no close family relations between the interviewees). Hezbollah enjoys backing from the Bekaa's powerful tribes and draws its fighters from the area's predominantly Shia population. The Bekaa is the birthplace of Hezbollah and several of its leaders. A short walk downhill from the municipality lies the ornate shrine of Abbas al-Moussawi, the Shia cleric who co-founded Hezbollah in 1982 with the help of Iran's Revolutionary Guards to fight against Israel's occupation of Lebanon. The Bekaa harboured the first training camp and served as a rear base as Hezbollah battled Israeli troops in the south until they withdrew in 2000. During the next war in 2006, Israel bombed one of the main bridges leading to the valley to cut off supply lines. In recent weeks, the Bekaa has again become a theatre of war. For the first time since October, when Hezbollah entered the



conflict in support of its ally Hamas, it used the valley on 25 August to launch drones towards Israel, its secretary general, Hassan Nasrallah, revealed in a speech that day. The drones were part of the long-anticipated answer to Israel's assassination of Fuad Shukur, the most senior Hezbollah commander to be killed in air and drone strikes that have left more than 400 Hezbollah combatants dead.

Nasrallah admitted that Shukur's killing was a "big loss," one that was particularly felt in Nabi Chit, his hometown. The use of the Bekaa as a launching pad was a symbolic act to avenge his death as much as a strategic message that Hezbollah was ready to activate its rear base.

Hezbollah's estimated arsenal of 150,000 rockets and missiles is mostly supplied by Iran, which has remained the group's main backer even as it evolved from its insurgent roots to becoming the de-facto state in Shia majority areas. Across Nabi Chit, posters pay tribute to Iranian leaders such as the late general Qassem Suleimani, who is credited with strengthening Iran's network of regional allies.

Despite this overt veneration, many here don't see Hezbollah as an Iranian proxy. "The west thinks there's a leader and a follower, that Iran gives an order, and we fire," said a different Mohammed Moussawi, the spokesperson of the Abbas al-Moussawi shrine,

▲ The Israeli strikes on Nabi Chit damaged civilian infrastructure including houses, cars and fields
PHOTOGRAPH SIMONA FOLTYN

which features a large poster of Iranian leaders next to the tomb. "The relationship is an alliance where decisions are taken through consultation. If Iran says, let's bomb Tel Aviv, but it's not in Hezbollah's interest, it won't happen."

People in Nabi Chit rallied around Hezbollah after the strikes. "I am with the resistance because of the injustice I experienced," said Moussawi, the supporter whose house was damaged.

He was arrested by the Israeli army in 1984, when it occupied Lebanon. During interrogation, Israeli officers pulled out all his teeth, he said, pausing to pop out his implants to reveal his toothless jaws. Upon his release, he went on to join Hezbollah. His grandson Hussain is likely to become the family's third generation to fight in Hezbollah's ranks.

One reason for the deep affiliation with Hezbollah is religion. The Bekaa is steeped in Shia doctrine. The Moussawi family traces its origins to the seventh Shia imam, Musa al-Kadhim, a successor to the prophet Muhammad. The struggle against injustice is a tenet of the Shia faith and evoking it has allowed Hezbollah to cast its participation in this conflict as a broader struggle against Israel's encroachment on Palestinian and Lebanese land.

Such views are further buoyed by anti-occupation beliefs that date back in history. "I stand with the Palestinians because if the Palestinians are gone, Israel will take on Lebanon next," said Sheikh Midhat Zeaiter, the chief of the most powerful tribe in the Bekaa.

In return for the tribes' loyalty, Hezbollah draws local officials and parliament members from their ranks and allows cannabis cultivation, even though the drug trade runs counter to its ideology.

The sheikh's son, Mohar Zeaiter, said: "We can differ on a hundred other issues, but not when it comes to fighting Israel."



Munich police
kill gunman
as shots fired
near Israeli
consulate

Kate Connolly
Berlin

The German chancellor, Olaf Scholz, has warned there is "no place" in Germany for antisemitism or Islamist extremism, after police in Munich shot dead a man carrying a "long-barrelled gun" following an exchange of fire near the Israeli consulate.

In a joint statement, the Bavarian state police and prosecutors said they believed the man had been planning a terrorist attack "involving the consulate general of the state of Israel".

Ronen Steinke, a journalist from the Munich-based Süddeutsche Zeitung, posted mobile phone footage of the shooting on X that he had apparently recorded from his office. A flurry of gunshots was reported at just after 9am local time.

A police spokesperson said the man had a "long-barrelled gun" that proved to be an old rifle.

The Israeli consulate and nearby Nazi documentation centre are under constant police watch, but have been under increased surveillance since the escalation of the conflict in the Middle East.

According to the Standard and Spiegel news outlets, the suspect was a teenage Austrian national who had recently travelled to Germany and lived in the Salzburg area. They also reported that he was known to the security authorities as an Islamist.

Police in Munich declined to comment on the reports and said they were not sharing information about the suspect.

In a post on X, Scholz praised the emergency services' "quick reaction" for having perhaps "prevented something terrible from happening". He added: "Antisemitism and Islamism have no place here."

Local media outlets were quick to point out that the incident took place on the 52nd anniversary of the attacks at the 1972 Munich Olympics, in which Palestinian terrorists killed two Israeli athletes and took nine others hostage. The hostages were killed during a botched rescue attempt.

Israel's president, Isaac Herzog, expressed "horror" at what he described as a terror attack.

"I spoke now with the president of Germany, my dear friend Frank-Walter Steinmeier. Together we expressed our shared condemnation and horror at the terror attack this morning near the Israeli consulate in Munich," Herzog said.

Additional reporting
Agencies Munich

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Guardian**

Ukraine appoints Zelenskiy loyalist as foreign minister

Peter Beaumont

Ukraine's parliament has approved the appointment of Andrii Sybiha as its new foreign minister, replacing Dmytro Kuleba as part of the biggest government reshuffle since the full-scale Russian invasion.

The president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, has said of the reshuffle, which is taking place at a critical juncture in the war with Russia, that the country needed "new energy".

Sybiha, a career diplomat, worked for several years in Zelenskyy's office. Critics have said the reshuffle represents a consolidation of power by a small group of Zelenskyy loyalists

allied with Andriy Yermak, the head of the president's office. A former ambassador to Turkey, Sybiha had also served as Yermak's deputy.

Alexander Kamyshin, a popular figure feted for keeping Ukraine's railways running through the war, is also being moved from the strategic industries ministry to the president's office. Others have raised eyebrows over the timing of the reshuffle, after a recent increase in Russian missile attacks on Ukraine.

The appointments come as Zelenskyy is preparing to travel to the US this month to present what Kyiv has called his "victory plan" to the president, Joe Biden, a key ally.

Zelenskyy has repeatedly called on allies to lift restrictions that ban Kyiv

from using western weapons for long-range strikes into Russia.

Russian forces are inching forward in the east and have stepped up their campaign of missile and drone attacks on Kyiv and other Ukrainian cities far from the frontline, hitting the power sector and other infrastructure in almost daily attacks.

The Russian president, Vladimir Putin, said yesterday that Ukraine's incursion into the Russian region of Kursk had failed to slow Russia's own advance in eastern Ukraine and had weakened Kyiv's defences along the frontline in a boost to Moscow.

That was countered by Nato's secretary general, Jens Stoltenberg, who said Ukraine had achieved "a lot" in its Kursk offensive.



▲ Andrii Sybiha, a career diplomat, had served in the president's office

Putin, speaking at the Eastern Economic Forum in Vladivostok, said that Russian forces were gradually pushing Ukrainian soldiers out of Kursk, where on 6 August Ukraine launched the biggest foreign attack on Russia since the second world war.

Ukraine had weakened its defences elsewhere and allowed Russia to accelerate its push into the eastern Donbas area, he said, reiterating that Moscow's primary aim was to take full control of the Donbas.

Putin said: "The enemy's goal was to make us nervous and worry and to transfer troops from one sector to another and to stop our offensive in

key areas, primarily in the Donbas. Did it work? No."

Ukraine's top commander, Gen Oleksandr Syrskiy, has said that one of the objectives of the Kursk operation was to divert Russian forces from other areas, primarily in eastern Ukraine near the cities of Pokrovsk and Kurakhove.

Though the Kursk incursion was an embarrassment for Putin and the top military brass, Russian officials are now portraying it as one of Kyiv's biggest tactical mistakes of the war, saying it ties down thousands of troops for little real gain.

"By transferring rather large and well-trained units to these border areas with us, the enemy weakened itself in key areas, and our troops accelerated offensive operations," Putin said.

Zelenskyy has said Kyiv plans to hold territory in Kursk and that the operation, which he says is part of a not fully disclosed victory plan, has brought the war home to Russians.

Additional reporting
Reuters and Associated Press

'Life goes on' Fashion week returns even as missiles fall on Kyiv

Shaun Walker
Kyiv

The audience stood for a moment of silence to honour fallen Ukrainian soldiers. Then the lights went down, the music went up, and a procession of models strutted by as the crowd snapped photos on their phones.

It is a ritual that has been repeated again and again this week in Kyiv, as Ukrainian fashion week returned on Sunday for the first time since Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022.

As the conflict drags on, daily life going on in the face of adversity has become a familiar feature of Ukrainian society but until now, Ukrainian fashion week – previously a twice-yearly fixture in Kyiv since its launch in 1997 – had been on hold. On Monday evening, the designer Ivan Frolov took over K41, which before the war was one of the capital's most talked-about electronic music venues, housed in a former brewery.

The secretive show was loosely based on a Ukrainian fairytale, and featured video installations, live music, fragrances and plenty of erotica alongside the viewing of Frolov's new collection. Instagram influencers and pop stars waited to snap photographs outside, and it was a moment of pure escapism for



a city rudely awoken at 5.30am by a missile and drone attack.

"During the second world war, the fashion industry worked – in London, people got dressed up and went to restaurants. Everyone in the world should understand that life still goes on here too," said Ruslan Baginskiy, a hat designer from the western city of Lviv, who has shot to global fame in recent years, working for Beyoncé and Madonna among others.

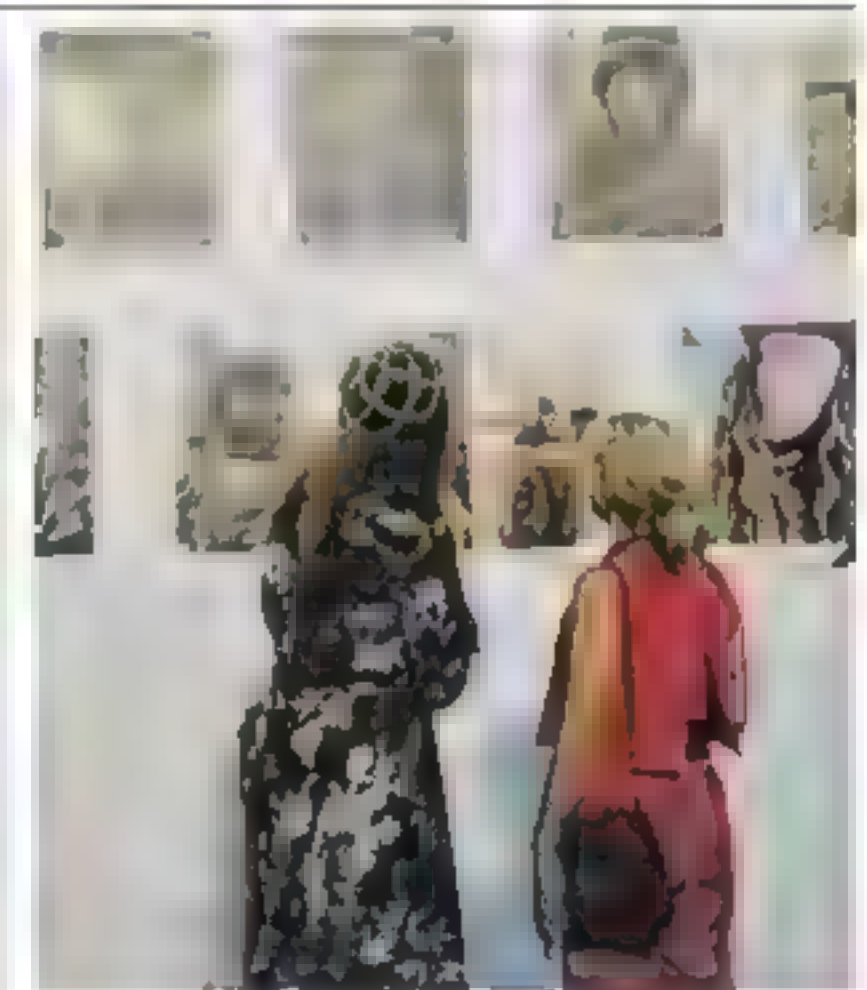
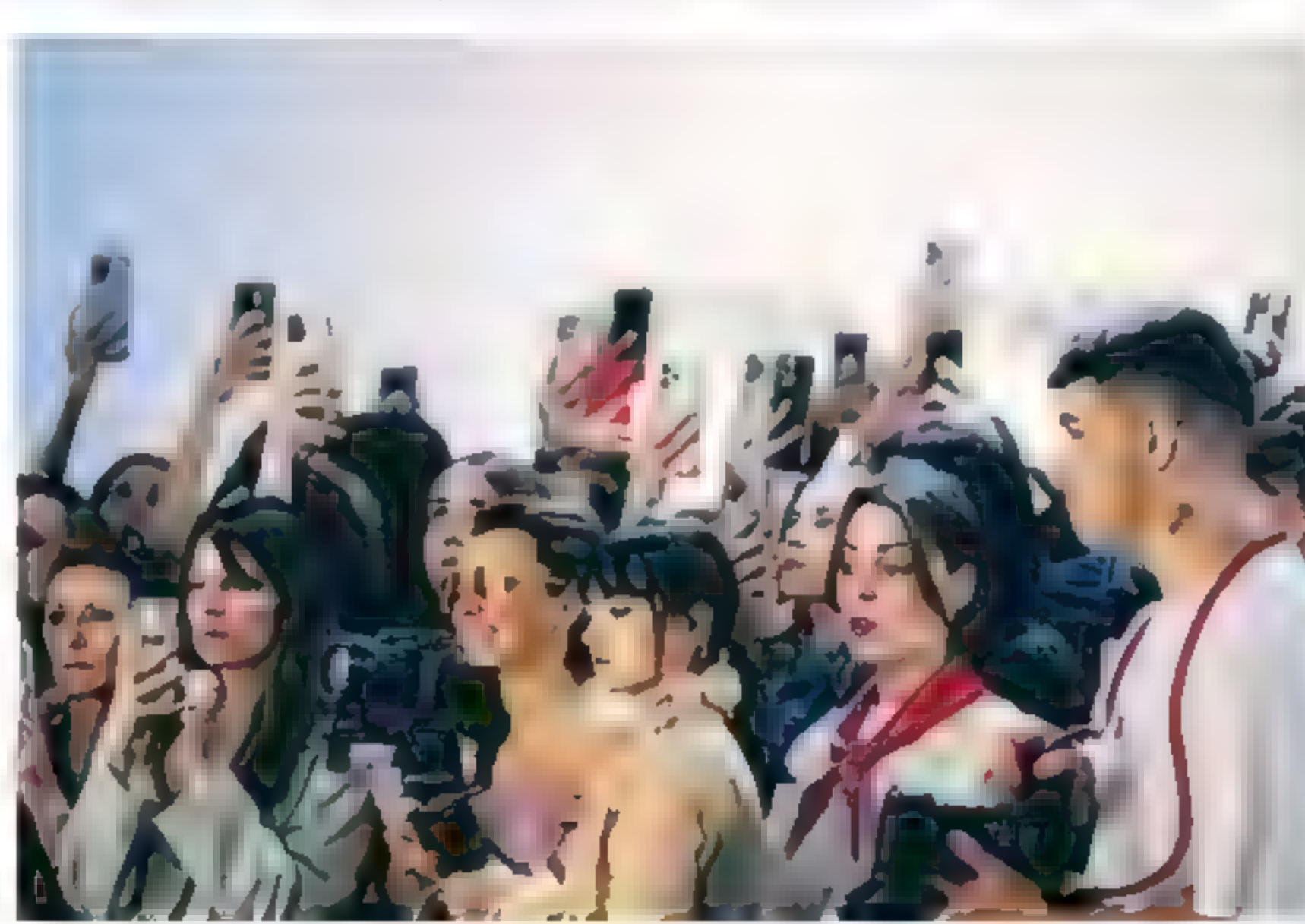
Iryna Danyilevska, the chief executive of Ukrainian fashion week, was eager to point out that fashion during wartime was not just about escapism. Many of the designers have referenced the country's circumstances.

The designer Kostiantyn Omelia created a collection inspired by the dried flowers he saw when he returned to his Kyiv studio in May 2022, having left for three months

▲ Models at Ukrainian fashion week in Kyiv, which aims to promote the country's creativity globally

PHOTOGRAPHS: JULIA KOCHETOVA/THE GUARDIAN

▼ Visitors at the event, which had been held twice-yearly since it was launched in 1997 before being put on hold when Russia invaded in 2022



▲ An exhibition dedicated to fashion workers who joined the armed forces

during the early part of the war. Ksenia Schnaider created a jacket made from vintage ties – the idea being that men have less time for ties in wartime, being dressed in either uniform or casualwear.

Asked if his production had been affected by the conscription of male workers, Baginskiy grew sombre. "Of course it has. The war has affected everyone. My own stepbrother was killed at the frontline," he said.

Danyilevska said the event aimed to promote Ukrainian design and creativity globally. The Russian invasion has accelerated a cultural awakening in Ukraine, where many artists across all creative sectors are looking to previously neglected history and folklore for inspiration.

Gunia, a brand set up in 2017 by two friends bored with working in big fashion, explores traditional Ukrainian folk themes and artisan techniques, which were "never something cool" previously, according to Maria Gavrilyuk, one of the co-founders.

"Previously when I travelled, I would say we were from Ukraine and nobody would know anything about it. Now, it's the moment when the world is understanding that we have a rich culture and lots of unique techniques," she said. "It's just a pity it took these circumstances for it to happen."

US school shooting suspect was interviewed last year, says FBI

Joanna Walters
Ed Pilkington

The 14-year-old boy charged with fatally shooting two students and two teachers with an assault-style rifle at a high school in Georgia on Wednesday had previously been interviewed by investigators, with his father insisting the teenager did not have unsupervised access to the family's guns.

The small city of Winder was in deep shock and mourning over the shooting at Apalachee high school, about 50 miles from Atlanta, as the victims who died were named.

The teenager has been charged as an adult in the deaths of the school students Mason Schermerhorn and Christian Angulo, both 14, and teachers Richard Aspinwall, 39, and Christina Irimie, 53, the director of the Georgia bureau of investigation, Chris Hosey, said.

At least nine other people – eight students and one teacher at the school – were taken to hospitals with injuries and all were expected to survive, the Barrow county sheriff, Jud Smith, said.

More than a year ago, tips about online posts threatening a school shooting led Georgia police to interview Colt Gray, then 13, but investigators did not have enough evidence for an arrest. On Wednesday, Gray was accused of opening fire at his school and yesterday he was due to be taken to a regional youth detention facility, after surrendering to the authorities when he was challenged during the shooting.

Armed with an assault-style rifle, the teenager allegedly turned the gun on students in a hallway at the school when classmates refused to open a locked door to their classroom, which he had left and then tried to get back into during an algebra lesson, a classmate, Lyela Sayarath, said.

The FBI said that Gray and family had been interviewed last year. It said: "The father stated he had hunting guns in the house, but the subject did not have unsupervised access to them. The subject denied making the threats online. Jackson county alerted local schools for continued monitoring of the subject."

Everybody was crying, everybody was trying to find their siblings'

Alexsandra Romero
Apalachee school pupil



Yesterday it emerged that users of the social media site Discord had raised concerns about the suspect with law enforcement in May 2023. The Associated Press obtained a sheriff's report from Jackson county in which the FBI had received a tip from users in Australia and Los Angeles that the teenager had made comments on a chat group in which he had "possibly threatened to shoot up a middle school tomorrow".

According to the report, when asked about the threat the teenager told a sheriff's official that "he would never say such a thing, even in a joking manner".

The Washington Post also reported that according to the suspected shooter's aunt, Annie Brown, he had been "begging for help from everybody around him" for months. The teenager had asked for help with his mental health struggles, which were

Local people at a vigil for the victims of Wednesday's shooting at Apalachee school in Winder, Georgia
PHOTOGRAPH: CHRISTIAN MONTERROSA/GETTY



exacerbated by difficulties at home, but "the adults around him failed him", Brown told the newspaper.

Hours after the shooting, state and federal law officers raided the Gray family home. Investigators told Fox 5 in Atlanta that they were looking for weapons, as well as digital devices that could give clues as to the timeline of what happened.

Joe Biden and Kamala Harris have separately condemned the killings. The US president called on Congress to pass tighter new gun laws, and the vice-president called it a "senseless tragedy" and called for "an end to this epidemic of gun violence". Harris said: "It doesn't have to be this way."

Students at the school spoke of their terror at hearing gunshots. Alexsandra Romero told the Atlanta Journal-Constitution that she had assumed it was a drill until another student burst into her classroom shouting for everyone to take cover.

"I can just remember my hands were shaking. I felt bad because everybody was crying, everybody was trying to find their siblings," she said.

It was the 385th mass shooting in the US this year, according to the Gun Violence Archive. It was already the eighth school shooting of the new school year, ABC's Good Morning America show reported yesterday.

Additional reporting
Associated Press



▲ Elon Musk and Donald Trump at a White House meeting in 2017

Trump to form government efficiency commission led by Musk

Nick Robins-Early
New York

Donald Trump has announced that, if elected as president, he would form a government efficiency commission, a policy idea that Elon Musk has been directly pushing him to take on.

In a speech yesterday, Trump claimed Musk had agreed to lead the commission. Trump made the announcement at the Economic Club of New York, but gave no specific details about how the commission would operate. He reiterated Musk's argument that such a commission would cut unnecessary spending, while also saying he would massively reduce government regulations.

"I will create a government efficiency commission tasked with conducting a complete financial and performance audit of the entire federal government, and making recommendations for drastic reforms," Trump told the crowd.

Musk and Trump have forged an increasingly close alliance over the past year, as the SpaceX and Tesla chief executive has thrown his full support behind Trump's presidential campaign. Musk's backing has given the world's richest man a direct line to influence Republican policy – and, if Trump were to actually create an efficiency commission, sweeping powers over federal agencies.

Musk's potential involvement in Trump's proposed commission would create obvious conflicts of interest, as his businesses such as SpaceX and Neuralink are regulated by, and have business with, numerous government agencies.

Musk reposted news of Trump's plans on X, formerly known as Twitter, which he bought for \$44bn, and suggested he would accept such a position. "I look forward to serving America if the opportunity arises," Musk posted. "No pay, no title, no recognition is needed."

Musk raised the idea of an efficiency commission with Trump during their interview on X last month, with Musk offering to "help out on such a commission". Musk has frequently pushed for deregulation, while at the same time facing investigations and lawsuits over allegations including breaking labour laws, violating animal-welfare protections and engaging in sexual harassment.

Russian TV presenter charged with money laundering by US

Andrew Roth

US investigators have indicted a prominent Russian state television personality and his wife for violating sanctions and money laundering as the White House targets Kremlin influence operations ahead of the US presidential elections.

Dimitri Simes, a television presenter and producer for Russia's

state-owned Channel One, was charged with receiving over \$1m (£759,000) in compensation, a personal car and driver, and a stipend for a flat in Moscow, Russia, despite the television station's designation in 2022 by the US's Office of Foreign Assets Control. He and his wife, Anastasia, were charged with money laundering to hide the proceeds of his work for Channel One.

Anastasia, 55, was also charged with buying arts and antiquities for

a sanctioned Russian oligarch, Aleksandr Udodov, and then storing the works in their home in Virginia before they were shipped onwards to Russia. The works were bought from galleries and auction houses in the United States and Europe.

The couple face 20 years in prison for each count if convicted. They left the US after Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 and are now believed to be in Russia, the justice department said.

"Joe Biden and his stooges are impotent cowards," wrote Dimitri Simes Jr, their son, on X. "Our family is safe and sound in Russia. We will not be intimidated. In fact, we're only going to get louder. Stay tuned!"

Simes, who had had contact with a number of members of Donald Trump's orbit, also figured prominently in special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation into Russian influence on the 2016 elections. He was never charged with a crime as part of that investigation.

The new allegations against Simes come one day after the US treasury department sanctioned Margarita Simonyan, who works for the state-controlled broadcaster RT, and nine other employees for running a covert disinformation network in the US that included well-known conservative American influencers who unwittingly took millions of dollars in Kremlin cash.

Marseille fans force U-turn after drinks firm's PSG own goal



◀ The brand tie-up between Paris Saint-Germain and Pernod Ricard – famous for its pastis, right – upset Olympique de Marseille supporters

MAIN PHOTOGRAPH BY CLEMENT MAHOUEAU/AFPI/GETTY IMAGES

Philip Oltermann
European culture editor

It is the quintessential pre-dinner *apéro* enjoyed in the Provençal afternoon sun, as unmistakably southern French as the clicking sound of a game of pétanque.

But at the start of this week the cloudy, aniseed-flavoured aperitif Ricard pastis left an aftertaste even more bitter than its makers intended in the mouths of some football fans in the southern city of Marseille.

When the Provence-based spirits giant Pernod Ricard announced on Monday that it was entering into a brand partnership with Paris Saint-Germain (PSG), the arch rivals of the home side, Olympique de Marseille, it provoked such an angry response that the company revoked the deal only three days later.

"It's a stab in the back, nothing more, nothing less," one Marseille supporter posted, voicing his discontent on X on Monday. "I have no words," said another. "When will a Bordeaux vineyard sponsor Toulouse FC or the Lyonnais *bouchons* [restaurants serving traditional Lyonnaise food] sponsor Saint-Étienne?" Rum would make a perfectly acceptable aperitif in the future, they suggested.

"Marseille deserves better than brands that sell their soul for Qatari euros," said another supporter.

Marseille and PSG, the only French clubs to have won major European trophies, have shared an intense rivalry since the 1970s, though PSG have started to dominate France's Ligue 1 since the club was taken over by the emir of Qatar in 2011.

In response to the news of the brand tie-up, one fan rewrote the lyrics to a traditional drinking song dedicated to Pernod Ricard's Pastis 51, *51 je t'aime*. "You used to dominate our bars at all the *apéros*," the lyrics shared on Marseille fan accounts read. "Now you're served in a stadium full of fascists" – a reference to the political leanings of the biggest PSG "ultra" group that used to dominate its Parc des Princes ground in Paris in the 1990s.

Paul Ricard concocted the first pastis after a 1915 ban on the more potent absinthe, which was thought to cause hallucinations and madness. Containing star anise as a key ingredient, pastis has been marketed as a ready-made drink since 1932 and is traditionally served diluted by a ratio of five parts water to one part spirit.

The blue-and-yellow logo on Ricard bottles was supposedly inspired by the sky and sun seen



EN VENTE ICI

from Marseille, where the spirits company is still based and which it hails, in its adverts, as "the best city in the world (according to the people of Marseille)".

In response to the fans' furore, a Pernod Ricard spokesperson initially told the regional radio station France Bleu Provence there had been a "lack of understanding" about the nature

of the brand partnership: the Provençal company was linking up with the Parisian club not as the maker of pastis but as a global drinks brand that also owns Absolut vodka, Jameson whiskey, Beefeater gin, Malibu liqueur, and Mumm and Perrier-Jouet champagnes.

The four-year deal between Pernod Ricard and PSG meant the drinks company would be the club's sole provider of champagne and spirits but not a shirt sponsor, the company tried to clarify.

But yesterday, Pernod Ricard said it was dropping its PSG plans. "For more than 90 years, Ricard's history has been intertwined with Marseille, where it was born, grew up and was inspired", the CEO, Alexandre Ricard, said in a statement announcing the U-turn. "And this link is stronger than anything else."

Will a Bordeaux vineyard sponsor Toulouse, or a Lyonnais restaurant Saint-Étienne?

Marseille football fan, posting on X

Māori queen ascends the throne in a 'new dawn' for New Zealand

Michelle Duff
Wellington

The second Māori queen in the eight-monarch reign of the Kiingitanga movement in New Zealand has ascended the throne, marking what Māori leaders have hailed as a "new dawn".

Ngā Wai Hono i te po Paki, the only daughter and youngest child of the former Māori king Tuheitia Potatau Te Wherowhero VII, was revealed as the new queen on the final morning of the six-day *tangihanga* (funeral) of her father, marking the beginning of a new generation in the resistance movement.



▲ Ngā Wai Hono i te po Paki is the youngest child of the previous king

Kiingi Tuheitia died in his sleep on Friday, aged 69, after heart surgery.

At the *Te Whakawahinga* (raising up) ceremony in the small town of Ngāruawāhia, which was attended by thousands, Ngā Wai Hono i te po Paki, 27, was ushered to the throne by the Kiingitanga advisory council known as the Tekau-Maa-Rua, a group of 12 elders from assorted tribes who chose her as their queen. The role is not automatically inherited, and the late Tuheitia also had two sons.

The chair of the council Che Wilson said *Te Whakawahinga* was an important ceremony dating back eight generations. "We follow the *tikanga* [mores] of our ancestors who created the Kiingitanga to unify and uplift our people, and we have chosen Ngā Wai Hono i te po as our new monarch." She was anointed with sacred oils and blessed with the Bible used to crown the first Māori king in 1858.

Ngā Wai Hono i te po Paki has a master's in Māori cultural studies

from Waikato University, and got her *moko kauae* (chin tattoo) at 19 as a gift to her father on the 10th anniversary of his coronation. The second-youngest Māori monarch, she had been at her father's side for many events in recent years, Stuff reported.

The Kiingitanga was founded in 1858 as a force to resist colonisation and try to preserve Māori culture and land. It has no legal mandate, yet while the role of monarch is largely ceremonial, they are considered the paramount chief of several tribes.

Since the election of New Zealand's conservative National party-led government in October, the Kiingitanga has played an increasingly prominent role in bringing Māori together in opposition to proposed policies considered a rollback of Māori rights.

Annette Sykes, a lawyer who has spent her career fighting for the rights of Māori, said it was exciting that the council of men had chosen a woman to lead, calling her "the new dawn".

Rome may limit access to Trevi fountain to halt the effects of overtourism

Ashifa Kassam

Officials are considering whether to limit access to the Trevi fountain, as Rome grapples with the impact of overtourism on the baroque masterpiece.

"Personally I would be in favour of looking at a new form of access, limited and timed, to the Trevi fountain," Alessandro Onorato, the city councillor responsible for tourism, told the newspaper *Corriere della Sera*.

Access would most likely be free for residents while others would be asked to make a "symbolic" contribution of €1-2, he said. The aim would not be to raise money, but to better control the masses who descend daily on the monument, curbing behaviour such as loitering and snacking in a place that "deserves respect".

On Wednesday, Rome's mayor, Roberto Gualtieri, said measures to curb tourist numbers were "a very concrete possibility".

"We've decided to study and investigate this because the situation is becoming technically very difficult to manage," he said. "Local police officers tell us this all the time there is a concentration of people that makes adequate protection of the monument difficult and is also often a source of degradation."

In Greece, authorities have implemented a time-slot system for the Acropolis, echoing a strategy already in place at Barcelona's Sagrada Família Basilica. In Venice, local authorities have experimented with an entry charge for visitors.

The conversation in Rome has taken on renewed importance as it gears up for the 2025 Jubilee, a year-long Roman Catholic event that happens every 25 years and is expected to draw more than 30 million tourists and pilgrims to the city.

Roman authorities have long had to intervene to protect the Trevi fountain from tourists, from the eight-person brawl that flared up in 2018 amid a scramble for the perfect selfie spot to people who set out picnics on the fountain's steps.

In 2017 it began imposing fines for bad behaviour at the fountain, including a crackdown on those who seek to frolic in the water in hopes of recreating the late Swedish actor Anita Ekberg's scene from Federico Fellini's film *La Dolce Vita*.



▲ Officials hope to curb behaviour such as swimming in the fountain

Analysis A new flashpoint and fresh fears emerge in the South China Sea

Rebecca Ratcliffe
South-east Asia correspondent

Hopes that tensions in the South China Sea might ease have proved shortlived. Only weeks after the Philippines and China struck a deal to try to stop dangerous confrontations at Second Thomas Shoal, a new flashpoint has emerged.

Over recent weeks, Manila has accused Chinese personnel of ramming its boats, blasting them with water cannon and firing flares at its aircraft, with incidents often centred on a new location, an atoll called Sabina Shoal. It comes as tensions in the South China Sea, a strategically important waterway that links the Indian and Pacific Oceans, were already at their highest in a decade.

A series of escalating incidents has provoked warnings that an error of judgment at sea could



◀ A collision last month between a Chinese vessel (left) and the Philippine coastguard's BRP Teresa Magbanua has fuelled tensions

PHOTOGRAPH: PHILIPPINE COAST GUARD/EPA

inadvertently spiral into armed conflict. This would risk drawing the US, a Philippine ally, into confrontation with China.

Analysts warn the political stakes for Manila and Beijing around Sabina Shoal could lead to an even more drawn-out struggle.

"Both countries have a lot to lose if they give up, in part because they both made such strong statements," said Ray Powell, the director of SeaLight, a maritime transparency project at Stanford University.

Tensions at Sabina have been growing since April, when the

Philippines sent its coastguard ship the BRP Teresa Magbanua to monitor the area, in response to concerns that China might be attempting to reclaim land at the shoal. In turn, China has steadily increased its presence at the shoal, with between two dozen and 40 vessels present at a time, said Powell.

Chinese state media reported suggestions that the Philippines was trying to use the Teresa Magbanua to forge a "quasi-military-grounding" at the shoal – drawing parallels with the BRP

Sierra Madre, a rusting second world war-era ship that was deliberately grounded at Second Thomas Shoal by the Philippines in 1999.

The Philippines points out that Sabina and Second Thomas shoals lie within its exclusive economic zone (EEZ), giving it special rights to build and construct in the area. However, China rejects this and claims much of the South China Sea as its own, despite an international tribunal Hague judgment rejecting its arguments.

"A de facto occupation of Sabina by another grounded ship would cross multiple lines that Beijing has tried to draw with Manila and present a real challenge in terms of how to respond without risking drawing in the United States," said Harrison Prétat, the deputy director and a fellow with the Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Sabina Shoal is important to the Philippines as it is close to Reed Bank, which is believed to be rich in oil and gas, and because it is the main staging ground for resupply missions to Second Thomas Shoal. Were China to take control of it, it could cut off resupplies to Second Thomas, and potentially stop vessels reaching Thitu Island, a Philippine island in the South China

Sea that is inhabited by about 400 civilians, said Collin Koh, a senior fellow at the S Rajaratnam School of International Studies Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies.

Perhaps even more importantly, the shoal has symbolic importance. With midterm elections next year in the Philippines, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr does not want to risk losing the shoal. He has vowed not to cede "one square inch of territory".

China's leadership also does not want to be humbled by what it considers "a much smaller and weaker adversary", said Koh. "For the ruling Communist party, for Xi Jinping, that is clearly going to be unworkable because it carries with it huge political costs."

The Philippines fears that, if it removes the Teresa Magbanua, Chinese vessels will take control of the site. Ultimately, the Philippines has no permanent presence at Sabina Shoal, giving China far less reason to agree to a compromise, and as confrontations become more normalised, the likelihood of errors of judgment increases.

Marcos Jr said in May that if any Filipino serviceman or citizen were killed by a wilful act in the South China Sea, this would be "very, very close to what we define as an act of war, and therefore, we would respond accordingly".

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Business

UK needs £1tn of investment to meet growth targets, City warns

Kalyeena Makortoff

The UK needs £1tn of fresh investment over the next decade if the government is to have any success in hitting its economic growth targets, a City taskforce has warned.

The Capital Markets of Tomorrow report, led by City veteran and former boss of Legal & General Sir Nigel Wilson, said that to achieve at least 3% annual growth, Britain would have to attract about £100bn of investment a year, shared between key sectors.

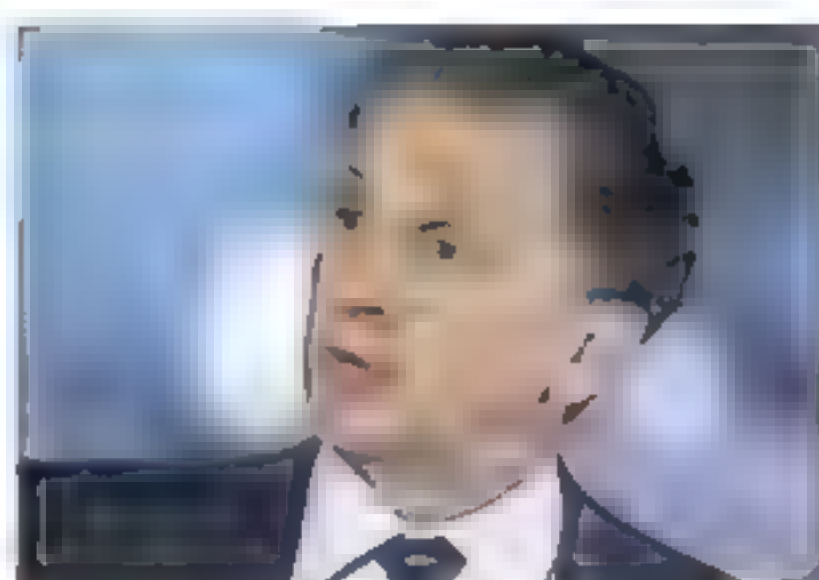
It includes £20-30bn towards the housing stock, £50bn for the energy sector and £8bn for water projects. It also calls for £20-30bn worth of venture capital for growing companies beyond the startup stage that need sustainable funding to expand.

The report said the challenge was to make the UK “a competitive market in which to invest”. While initiatives to boost investment in infrastructure

and companies were under way, it stressed the government and regulators needed to be focused on creative opportunities and incentivising investors. “The global pitch needs to be levelled,” it said.

“There has never been such a large amount of money globally available and seeking investment opportunities,” Wilson said. “Capital pools include domestic and international capital sources such as sovereign wealth funds, retail investment and private equity ‘dry powder’, and the UK is fortunate in that we have £6tn of long-term capital within our pension and insurance industries. In other words, the supply of capital for growth is available.”

That includes creating new investment funds through an existing long-term investment for tech and life sciences (Lifts) initiative to attract private cash, and ensuring the £60-70bn a year of tax breaks for annual pension funds is applied in a way that encourages investment in UK



▲ Sir Nigel Wilson said the supply of capital for UK growth was available

companies. It also called for the reintroduction of tax credits on dividends received from UK companies, which were scrapped in 1997.

Wilson's report also stressed that the UK needs to kickstart a culture in which everyday consumers are far more keen to take risks and invest their money in British companies rather than leave it languishing in cash accounts.

That could be aided by ending stamp duty on share purchases, and allowing companies to nudge people

with high amounts of cash savings towards investments.

They also called for a “streamlined” UK ISA that would allow people to invest a certain amount of money in British stocks, tax-free. While plans for a British ISA were floated under the last Tory government, reports this week suggested the chancellor, Rachel Reeves, was poised to mothball the project.

The report was produced for the UK Capital Markets Industry Taskforce (CMIT), an influential body led by the London Stock Exchange chief executive, Dame Julia Hoggett, alongside senior City figures including the bosses of asset manager Schroders, pharmaceuticals company GSK, pension savings provider Phoenix Group and venture capital firm Lakestar.

Hoggett said: “We have a great base in the UK on which to build ... but the opportunities need to be seized.”

CMIT has, since its founding in 2022, been pushing for reform of regulations that it believes have stifled investment and which it believes have left the UK lagging behind the US when it comes to the development of capital markets and growth.

The Treasury said: “We have taken action to reinvigorate our capital markets and boost growth, including by announcing a pensions investment review to drive more investment.”

Pay app glitch leaves Betfred staff ‘unable to afford bills’

Rob Davies

Staff at the bookmaker Betfred have complained that they were left unable to pay bills – and in one case having to use a food bank – after a system that allows employees to access their pay in advance failed.

Posts on an internal chat system, seen by the Guardian, indicate that some of Betfred's 8,000 employees faced financial hardship over the course of at least two weeks, as the company struggled to fix a problem with Wagestream, an app that staff can use to access up to 40% of their monthly salary in advance.

Betfred, owned by members of the billionaire Done family and headed by the Mancunian brothers Fred and Peter – who gave £375,000 to the Conservatives in 2016 and 2017 – said on Tuesday it had resolved the problem.

Wagestream is one of a relatively new breed of “salary advance schemes” intended to give staff more control over when they receive their pay and help them avoid costly credit alternatives, such as payday loans.

In the chat messages, one staff member said she knew “people who have switched their bills to weekly and are now missing those payments”, while others raised concerns about their ability to afford to travel to work.

Another said they had “managed to now get myself into debt and not afraid to admit I [sic] now had to use food banks and rely on people's generosity to get me through the past two weeks”. The employee asked: “Where is the help from Betfred when this arises? They have allowed this mess to happen.”

Betfred did not answer questions about what measures it had put in place to support affected staff. A spokesperson said: “Working with our suppliers we have identified and resolved the issue. We will be speaking to our staff directly.”

The problem is understood to have begun when Betfred switched the software it used to manage shifts and payroll data, migrating to a platform called Shopworks.

A spokesperson for Shopworks said: “There was a problem two weeks ago relating to the transfer of data to Shopworks from one of the other technology providers that Betfred use, that caused some issues for Betfred's payroll team. Faulty data meant shift and pay information could not be uploaded to Wagestream [its salary advance facility], rendering staff unable to access it.”

Wagestream was approached for comment.

Topshop could return to high street after Asos sells stake

Sarah Butler

Topshop and Topman could return to the high street after Asos handed control of the fashion brand to the billionaire behind Vero Moda and Jack & Jones in a £135m deal.

The online fashion retailer said it had sold a 75% stake in Topshop, the group it bought just over three years ago for £330m, to Heartland, an arm of Bestseller, the Danish fashion business controlled by the major Asos shareholder Anders Povlsen.

The deal will help Asos repay debts, as it said sales continued to slide – by more than the 15% it had already told the City to expect – amid a soggy summer and consumer caution in the light of high energy bills.

Povlsen, a Danish billionaire who is Scotland's biggest landowner, already owns brands including Jack & Jones and Vero Moda through his Bestseller business.

Topshop, which had 70 stores including a flagship site on Oxford Street in London, fell into administration in late 2020 as part of the collapse of Sir Philip Green's Arcadia empire. It was relaunched the following year by Asos, selling clothing online only.



José Antonio Ramos Calamonte, the chief executive of Asos, said a Topshop website would be relaunched by next summer and that Bestseller had “extensive experience” of operating its own high street stores and wholesale-to-department stores, which could help raise awareness of the brand. At present, apart from online, Topshop products are only sold in Nordstrom department stores.

“We might open stores. We will consider it for sure but we have no specific agreement to open a certain number,” he said.

Shares in Asos were up 20% yesterday after it announced the deal. The company will continue to sell Topshop and Topman items on its website but will now pay a royalty fee.

The deal values Topshop at £180m, down from the £265m paid to buy the brand from administrators to Sir Philip Green's Arcadia empire in 2021. The total £330m price tag included £65m of stock.

Asos will hold on to a 22.5% stake, and its existing Topshop partner Nordstrom just over 2%, with Heartland controlling the rest.

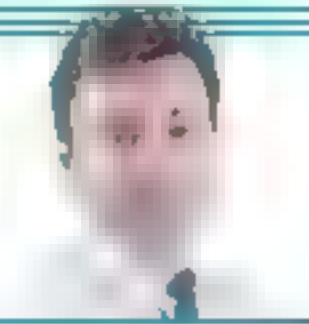
▲ Kate Moss launches her Topshop clothing range in 2007. The retailer fell into administration in 2020

PHOTOGRAPH: GRAEME ROBERTSON/GUARDIAN

Calamonte said the sell-off would help “accelerate our strategy to both offer customers the best and most relevant product and to turn Asos into a company that delivers sustainable, profitable growth”. Calamonte said Asos had put the Topshop brand “back in shape for growth”, having revamped its supply chain, product quality and creative direction.

Business view

Nils Pratley



Royal Mail is close to the reform it craved. Shareholders should oppose the Czech takeover bid

When the board of Royal Mail's parent company rolled over in May and recommended a £3.6bn takeover offer from a Daniel Křetínský-led bid vehicle, one reason it gave was "significant uncertainty" around regulatory reform.

That was a fair description at the time of Ofcom's leisurely approach to reviewing the universal service obligation (USO), the requirement on Royal Mail to deliver nationwide six days a week at a uniform price. Even as letter volumes plunged, the regulator had danced around the question of reform for half a decade and, even in review mode

since the new year, still wasn't clear about what it might accept.

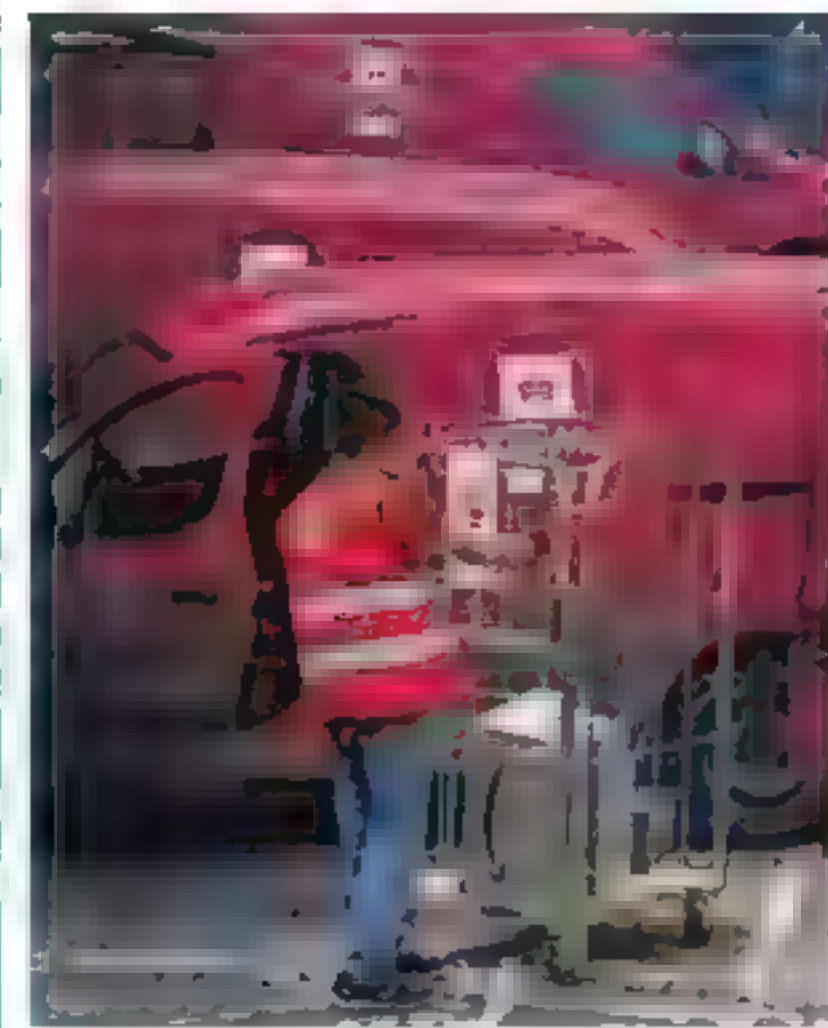
But Keith Williams, the chairman of International Distribution Services (IDS), could not make the same bleat about uncertainty now – at least, not so definitively. Ofcom has spoken and – hallelujah – there's a decent chance Royal Mail will get everything it wanted. Scrapping second-class letter deliveries on Saturdays is formally on the table, just as the company proposed. A final decision is due next summer. Remember the potential cost savings Royal Mail talked about: up to £300m a year, which is more than small change.

Remember, too, that shareholders haven't yet voted on the Křetínský bid. The deal is paused while the government

scrutinises the potential national security risks in allowing a Czech billionaire and his 44% co-investors, J&T, to own a key bit of UK economic infrastructure. So there is time for IDS shareholders to kick up a fuss on the essential question of whether 370p a share is a fair price at which to flog the owner of the national postal service. They should protest. As argued here previously, Williams and co capitulated to their awkward 27% owner too cheaply and at the wrong moment.

The strong whiff of USO reform should prompt a fundamental rethink. The cost savings could be genuinely transformative in the context of a company that, after a bitter year of strikes, is only now implementing changes to working practices. So look beyond the strike-afflicted year of operating losses of £348m, and consider that Royal Mail is a business where small shifts, percentage-wise, in fixed costs can make a big difference to the bottom line. Annual turnover is almost £8bn. A 3% operating margin should not be impossible in time.

Then there's the fact that the big value within IDS lies in GLS, the very profitable Dutch logistics company. The operation was having a slightly tougher run in the group's last set of numbers,



▲ Ofcom is reviewing Royal Mail's duty to deliver letters six days a week

Scrapping second-class letter deliveries on Saturdays is formally on the table. Remember the potential savings: up to £300m a year

but nobody doubts its long-term quality. Also recall that IDS itself, when it was resisting Křetínský's lower offers, used to shout about "the significant underpin of value" from having an "extensive freehold property portfolio" and a pension scheme with "a material surplus" of £1.02bn. One can do sum-of-the-parts valuations on IDS and get close to the offer price of 370p with little effort.

It is true, of course, that the shares were languishing at 214p before Křetínský showed his hand, but the board of IDS, before its U-turn, called it correctly when it said the Czech Sphinx's timing was "opportunistic". A so-so price agreed in the spring may look out of date by the time a vote happens.

Columbia Threadneedle Investments, with a 5% stake, was alone in the fund management world in arguing that 370p "undervalues the business and doesn't fully reflect its long-term intrinsic value". It's about time other active (allegedly) major fund managers on the IDS register (think Redwheel and Schroders) told us what they think.

Selling Royal Mail to a foreign billionaire waving a few time-limited pledges of good behaviour always felt bizarre in its own right. But doing so when USO reform is in sight would be pathetic.

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◀ An electric car production line at Volkswagen's Emden site. The company has shocked its workforce by announcing the possible closure of two factories in Germany

PHOTOGRAPH
DAVID HECKER, AFP,
GETTY IMAGES

2m

VW's 2023 vehicle output in Germany, below its production capacity of 2.7m

23%

The proportion by which VW must reduce CO₂ emissions from its cars next year to avoid EU fines

Volkswagen Closures make financial sense to car company, but a political battle looms

Jasper Jolly

When Bernd Pischetsrieder attempted to cut jobs at Volkswagen in the early 2000s, he was forced out. When Herbert Diess tried the same, he got the same result, leaving in 2022. Yet now Volkswagen appears to be deliberately grasping the nettle. "This time it's different," says Matthias Schmidt, a Berlin-based automotive analyst. The chief executive, Oliver Blume, is "VW through and through", and his actions probably reflect the desires of the controlling Porsche and

Piëch dynasties, Schmidt says. The course is set for a historic clash over the future of Germany's largest carmaker.

The manufacturer's announcement this week that it is considering the closure of two German factories has shocked its workforce, who gave a first taste of the opposition they will mount with protest banners carried into a meeting of thousands of employees with executives on Wednesday.

It comes as Europe's incumbent carmakers find themselves squeezed on all sides. Demand is subdued, EU and UK rules on carbon emissions are tightening, and Chinese competitors are muscling in on their business.

That may be why VW's owners have decided that now is the time

to cut factories. Schmidt says the company has long been a "bloated monster" in its home operations.

The group has the capacity to produce 2.7m cars a year in Germany, according to figures collated by MarkLines, a data company. However, its factories collectively produced only just under 2m cars in 2023, suggesting that several are indeed being severely underused.

Osnabrück, in Lower Saxony, and Dresden, in Saxony, have previously been earmarked by analysts for potential closure. Osnabrück – nominally capable of 100,000 cars a year, but running far below that in recent years, according to MarkLines – produces the T-Roc Cabriolet and the Golf, which is on its way out. Dresden

has a smaller capacity of 20,000, but its 2023 output of 6,000 also suggests it is running inefficiently.

Factory closure decisions are always politically fraught, but VW will have to pay closer attention than most. The state of Lower Saxony is Volkswagen's second-largest shareholder, with 20% of voting rights. Stephan Weil, the state's premier, said on Monday that plant closures should "simply not come into question".

Germany's chancellor, Olaf Scholz, will also be watching closely. Thousands of job losses could fuel economic resentments that have contributed to the revival of the German far right; Alternative für Deutschland on Sunday became the first far-right party since the Nazi era to win a state election.

It is unclear how factory closures will affect the shift from petrol to electric. Blume's predecessor, Diess, had set a course for Volkswagen to catch up with rivals in zero-emissions vehicles, amid the backlash from the Dieselgate scandal – in which it had been found to have cheated emissions tests – and soaring demand for electric cars during the pandemic.

Things look different now for the electric car market, with some carmakers retreating from previous ambitions as sales stagnate. This week Volvo added to the sense of a European industry retrenching, as it ditched a target to sell only electric cars by 2030.

Volvo, Ford and Mercedes-Benz are among the carmakers that plan to make more of their profitable hybrid cars rather than going all-out for the climate lead.

Yet even if they wanted to, Europe's carmakers cannot ignore the need to reduce emissions from their cars – a vital step in meeting the Paris climate goal of keeping global heating within 1.5C of preindustrial levels. Carmakers must meet stricter targets in 2025 under EU law, or face steep €95 (£80) fines for every extra gram of CO₂ each car produces on average.

Philippe Houchois, an analyst at Jefferies, says Volkswagen is "worst positioned for 2025 compliance" out of the main European carmakers. It needs to reduce average emissions from the cars it sells in 2025 by 23% compared with 2023 levels to avoid fines. The 2025 CO₂ targets "could accelerate capacity restructuring across the industry", he says.

His analysis suggested Ford and Stellantis, the owner of brands including Fiat, Peugeot and Vauxhall, may also need to cut capacity. But increasingly competitive rivals from China are perhaps the greatest shadow over European factories, and may have influenced Volkswagen.

Rico Luman, an economist at ING, an investment bank, says carmakers are trying to hang on to "much more profitable" hybrids, but they need to keep investing in electric technology. Volkswagen's global market share has fallen as electric sales have increased.

"I am a bit wary of losing market share," says Luman. "You should focus on the long term. You can tweak a bit with production delays, but you can't postpone it for five or 10 years."

China detains AstraZeneca staff over possible drug import breach

Kalyeena Makortoff

Chinese police have reportedly detained five current and former AstraZeneca employees as part of an investigation into possible breaches related to data privacy and importing an unlicensed medication.

The detentions took place this summer, and targeted Chinese citizens who marketed cancer drugs for

the oncology division of the British pharmaceutical company, according to Bloomberg.

Police are investigating whether AstraZeneca employees were involved in importing a drug meant to treat liver cancer, but which had not been approved for distribution across mainland China.

The investigation, led by police in the Shenzhen region, is also examining the way the company collected patient data, and whether that may

have broken China's privacy laws. AstraZeneca said in a statement: "We are aware of a small number of our employees in China are under investigation and we have no further information to share at this point."

It comes amid a wider anti-corruption drive by Beijing over the past year, with authorities trying to crack down on kickbacks and the misuse of public funds in the pharmaceutical and healthcare sector.

AstraZeneca has about 16,000 staff in China, which makes up 13% of the company's revenues, or about \$6bn (£4.6bn) of a total \$44bn (£33bn). That scale makes AstraZeneca best known in Britain for its Covid-19 vaccine developed in conjunction with

Oxford University during the pandemic – China's largest overseas drugmaker in terms of sales.

The company, which has about 90,000 employees around the world, previously targeted Chinese biotech firms for acquisitions and discussed strategies for growth in the country.

On purchasing the rare disease specialist Alexion for \$39bn in 2020, AstraZeneca identified China as an important market in which to

16,000

Number of AstraZeneca staff in China. Five current and former employees have been detained

expand the company. But last year it reportedly considered spinning off its business in China and listing its shares in Hong Kong or Shanghai to shield it from rising tensions between China and the US and its allies.

It was hoped the move would protect AstraZeneca from any potential crackdown on overseas businesses by Chinese authorities.

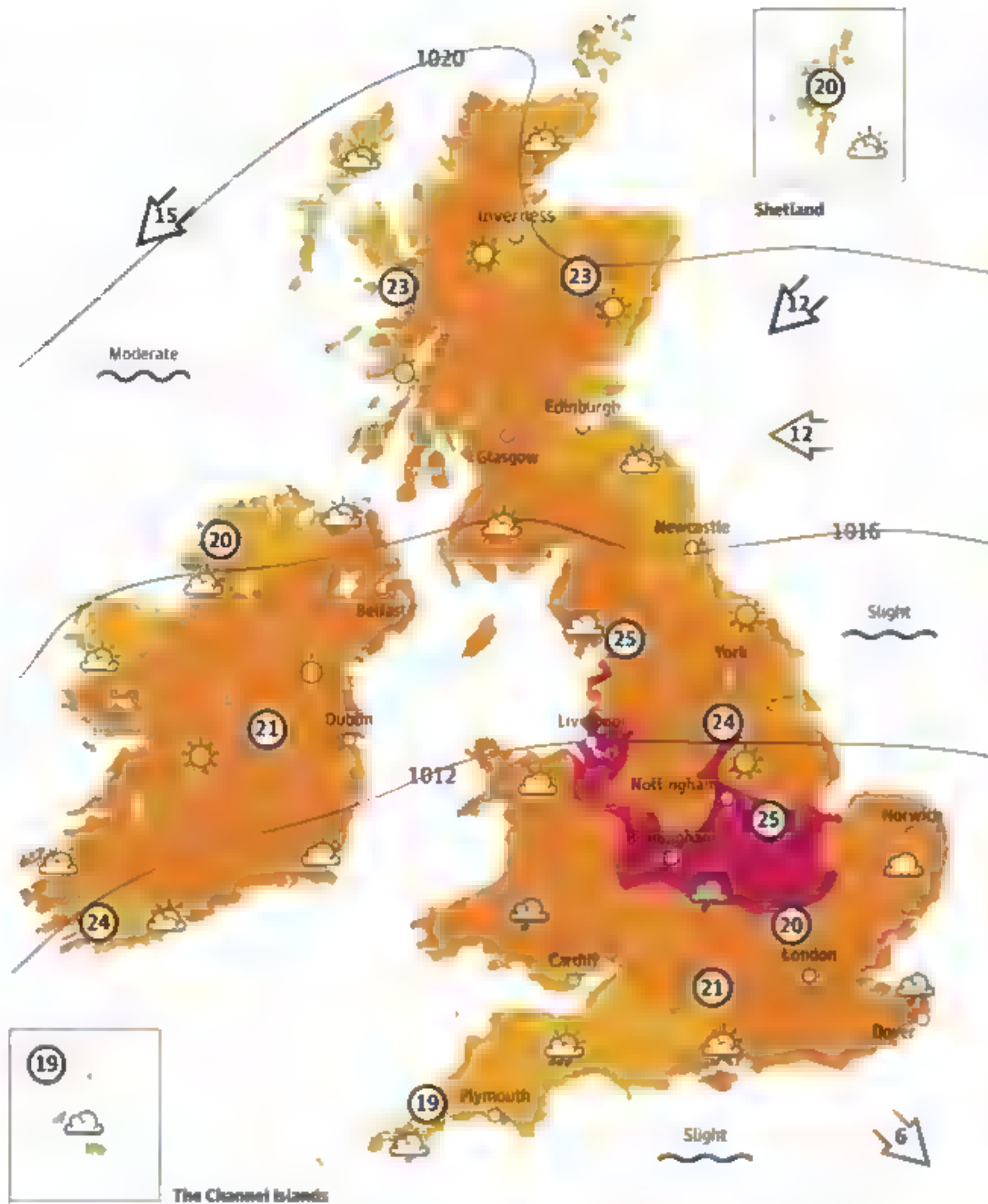
Speculation is also growing that geopolitical tensions could worsen if Donald Trump wins the US presidential election in November.

Trump's running mate and prospective vice-president, JD Vance, told CBS in May "I don't like China" as he bluntly blamed the country for problems in the US jobs market.

Weather

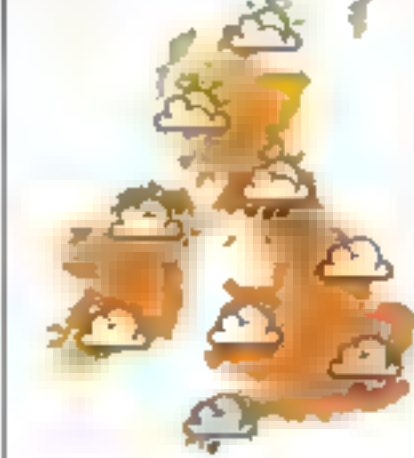
Friday 6 September 2024

UK and Ireland Noon today

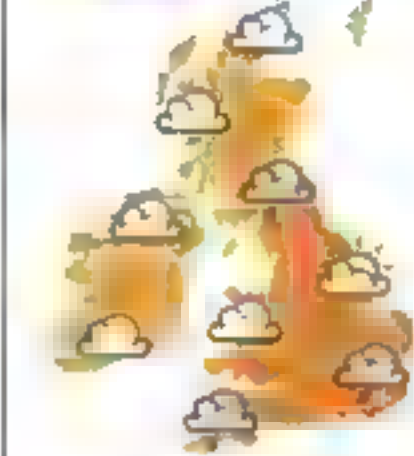


Forecast

Low **16** High **23**
Tomorrow



Low **12** High **22**
Sunday



Carbon count

Daily atmospheric CO₂ readings from Mauna Loa, Hawaii (ppm):

Latest	
03 Sep 2024	422.78
Weekly average	
25 Aug 2024	421.36
05 Sep 2023	419.27
05 Sep 2014	396.42
Pre-industrial base	280
Safe level	350

Source: NOAA ESRL

Around the UK

London

Lows and highs

15 20

Precipitation

90%

Air pollution

Low

Manchester

Lows and highs

16 25

Precipitation

0%

Air pollution

Low

Edinburgh

Lows and highs

13 18

Precipitation

0%

Air pollution

Low

Belfast

Lows and highs

12 22

Precipitation

0%

Air pollution

Low

Birmingham

Lows and highs

14 25

Precipitation

15%

Air pollution

Low

Brighton

Lows and highs

14 21

Precipitation

80%

Air pollution

Low

Bristol

Lows and highs

14 19

Precipitation

90%

Air pollution

Low

Cardiff

Lows and highs

14 19

Precipitation

100%

Air pollution

Low

Newcastle

Lows and highs

14 20

Precipitation

0%

Air pollution

Low

Penzance

Lows and highs

14 18

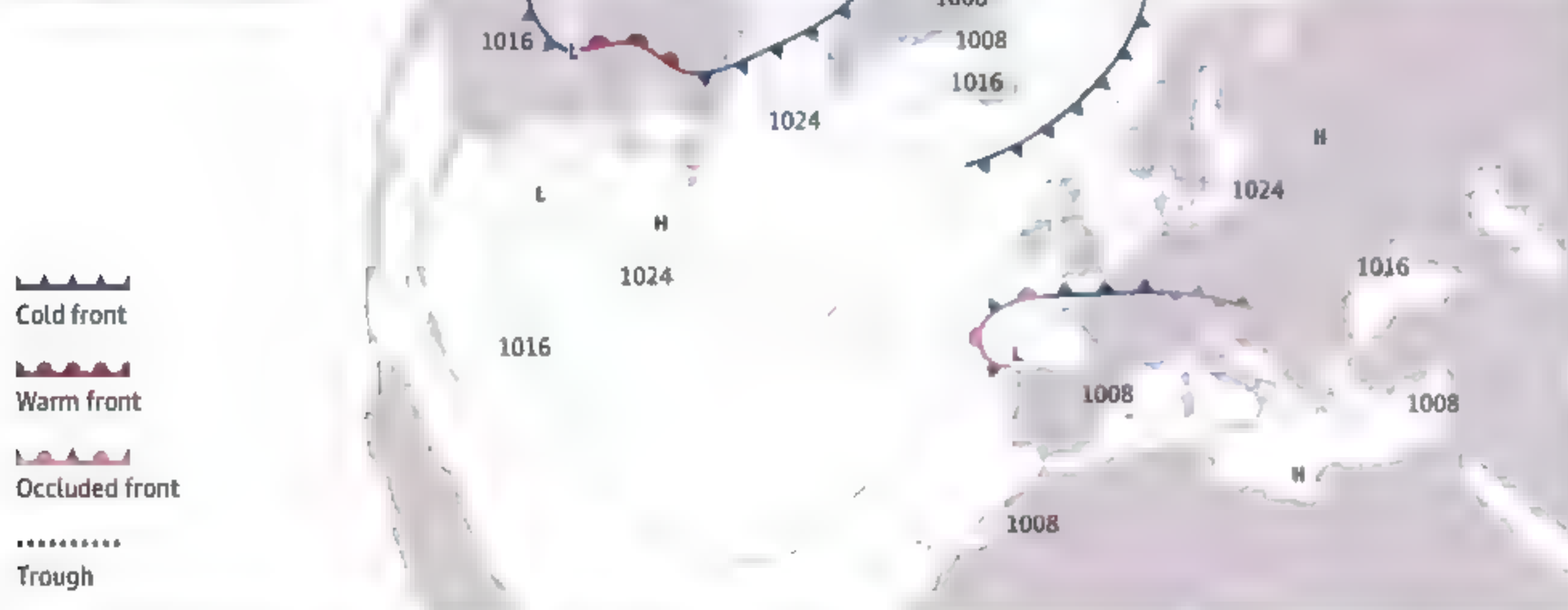
Precipitation

15%

Air pollution

Low

Atlantic front



High tides

Aberdeen	0346	4.2m	1611	4.0m
Avonmouth	1001	12.2m	2211	12.3m
Barrow	0149	8.9m	1407	8.6m
Belfast	0136	3.4m	1354	3.1m
Cobh	0802	3.8m	2017	3.9m
Cromer	0859	5.0m	2131	4.7m
Dover	0141	6.3m	1353	6.5m
Dublin	0150	3.9m	1411	3.7m
Galway	0757	4.8m	2009	4.8m
Greenock	0252	3.5m	1528	3.2m
Harwich	0226	3.7m	1431	3.8m
Holyhead	0041	5.5m	1300	5.2m
Hull	0851	7.3m	2114	7.0m
Leith	0511	5.4m	1730	5.2m
Liverpool	0131	9.1m	1348	8.8m
London Bridge	0434	6.8m	1645	6.8m
Lossiemouth	0217	4.0m	1440	3.8m
Milford Haven	0852	6.6m	2104	6.7m
Newquay	0743	6.6m	1955	6.7m
North Shields	0553	5.0m	1817	4.7m
Oban	0822	3.8m	2028	3.9m
Penzance	0716	5.2m	1929	5.3m
Plymouth	0829	5.2m	2038	5.3m
Portsmouth	0158	4.4m	1424	4.5m
Southport	0105	8.8m	1322	8.5m
Stornoway	0920	4.5m	2122	4.6m
Weymouth	0834	1.2m	2044	1.3m
Whitby	0630	5.5m	1853	5.2m
Wick	0145	3.4m	1406	3.2m
Workington	0154	8.1m	1413	7.8m

Sun & Moon



AccuWeather.com
 Forecasts and graphics provided by AccuWeather ©2024

Lighting up

Belfast	2003 to 0644
Birmingham	1942 to 0629
Brighton	1934 to 0624
Bristol	1945 to 0634
Cardiff	1950 to 0630
Cork	2008 to 0656
Dublin	2002 to 0646
Glasgow	1958 to 0635
Harlech	1952 to 0638
Inverness	1959 to 0631
London	1934 to 0623
Manchester	1946 to 0630
Newcastle	1946 to 0625
Norwich	1931 to 0616
Penzance	1955 to 0647

Pollutionwatch

A study from Imperial College London has revealed that daily death rates in London rise when the air is filled with pollution from burning wood and other solids.

This pattern was seen by looking at dates of death of more than 465,000 people over 10 years. The clearest signal was seen in the death rates from respiratory problems, with increases that lasted at least three days.

Knowing which pollution source is the most harmful is a longstanding goal of health researchers to help governments focus efforts at cleaning our air.

Health impacts from wood and solid-fuel burning were not confined to winter when people are using their stoves and fireplaces. Although there is much less wood-burning pollution in summer, the wood-burning particles appeared to be more harmful than in winter. This may be due to inhaling more smoke when huddled around bonfires, fire pits or chimneys. Sunlight and warmer weather also cause chemical reactions with pollutants that may affect their toxicity.

The study adds to a growing body of research that suggests that particles from biomass combustion, such as wood burning, are especially bad for lung health. **Gary Fuller**

Around the world

Algiers	31	Lisbon	27
Amsterdam	28	Madrid	27
Athens	32	Malaga	30
Auckland	28	Melb'rne	28
B Aires	28	Mexico C	30
Bangkok	31	Miami	30
Barcelona	27	Milan	28
Basra	45	Mombasa	28
Beijing	29	Moscow	32
Berlin	30	Mumbai	28
Bermuda	29	N Orleans	28
Brussels	29	Nairobi	30
Budapest	29	New Delhi	30
C'hagen	26	New York	30
Cairo	34	Oslo	28
Cape Town	28	Paris	28
Chicago	31	Perth	27
Corfu	31	Prague	27
Dakar	29	Reykjavik	11
Dhaka	34	Rio de J	28
Dublin	21	Rome	28
Florence	29	Shanghai	32
Gibraltar	29	Singapore	32
H Kong	30	Stockh'm	30
Harare	27	Strasb'g	30
Helsinki	30	Sydney	31
Istanbul	30	Te Aviv	28
J'a burg	28	Tenerife	32
K Lumpur	32	Tokyo	32
K'mandu	27	Toronto	28
Kabul	28	Vancouver	28
Kingston	32	Vienna	28
Kolkata	32	Warsaw	28
L Angeles	37	Wash'ton	28
Lagos	28	Well'ton	28
Lima	28	Zurich	28

Malaysian superstar
Bonnie Bunyau Gustin
is in action from 11am

Paris
2024

Today

Weather
23°

Highlights

8.35am
Storey aims at No 30

This is getting a bit silly, now. Dame Sarah Storey, 46 years young and already the most decorated British Paralympian with 29 medals that includes a remarkable 18 goals, added to her haul on Wednesday with C5 time trial victory, 32 years after her first Paralympic golds in Barcelona. She goes again in Paris in the C4-5 road race, an event she won in 2012, 2016 and in Tokyo. "It's the first time that my little boy [Charlie] will be able to remember the Games," she said. "He's now six years old and I had to leave him for three weeks to do the Games in Tokyo when he was only three. When I got back from those Games, he said: 'Mum, I really want to go to Paris and watch your race'."

9.58am
Sandilands v Brannigan

Great Britain's Ben Sandilands has hopes of a medal in the men's T20 1500m final. The 21-year-old from Kirkcaldy won world championship gold in 2023, beating the US's world record holder and Rio Paralympic champion, Michael Brannigan, in the process. Brannigan has struck back since, winning the 2024 world title and is the fastest man in the event this year. Sandilands's season's best, though, is less than a second behind the American. Their head-to-head battle could be a thriller.

10.51am
Aiming high

He has a name similar to a certain long jumper, but Jonathan

Medal table

					Total
1	China	74	55	37	166
2	Great Britain	36	29	19	84
3	USA	27	33	17	77
4	Netherlands	21	10	5	36
5	France	17	22	22	61
6	Italy	16	11	27	54
7	Ukraine	15	20	26	61
8	Brazil	15	18	29	62
9	Australia	14	12	19	45
10	Germany	9	9	15	33

Broom-Edwards is very much his own man and won T64 high jump gold in Tokyo after silver in 2016. The Essex-born athlete credits his 2022 appearance on Celebrity SAS Who Dares Wins as switching his competitive mindset - training involved sleep deprivation - and he remains one of the favourites for gold this morning after winning at the world championships this year.

11am
Lift-off for Gustin

Bonnie Bunyau Gustin is a superstar in Malaysia and was a flag bearer, along with track cyclist Nur Suraiya Muhamad Zamri, at the opening ceremony. The 25-year-old likes to relax before competition playing video games and Gustin won his country's first Paralympic gold in powerlifting at the Tokyo Games in the men's 72kg event, where he set a Paralympic record of 228kg. The 4ft 4in athlete - son and brother to international powerlifters - has twice beaten that mark and is now the world record holder at 231kg after a sensational lift at the world championships last year.

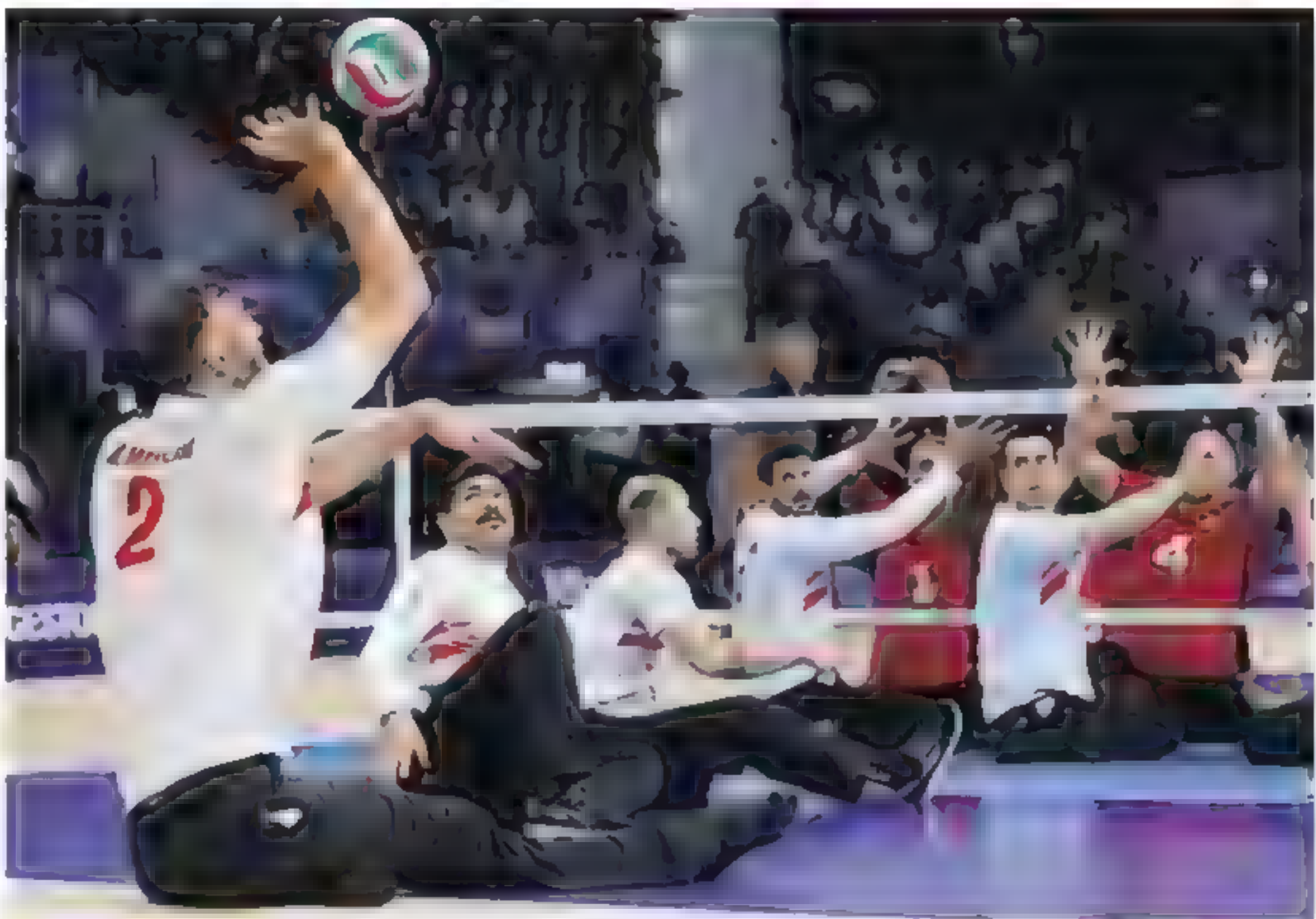
12.30pm
Hewett and Reid go for gold

Alfie Hewett has had a busy Games. The men's wheelchair tennis world No 1 has played seven matches in five days and still has a couple of medal contests to go. His first chance of silverware comes today in the men's doubles. He and his partner, Gordon Reid, the No 1 seeds, take on Japan's Takuya Miki and Tokito Oda on Court Philippe-Chatrier in a repeat of the 2024 French Open final. The British pair won 6-1, 6-4 on that occasion so come into today's match with plenty of confidence

1pm
Davies in table tennis final

Great Britain have had a solid time in the table tennis, picking up three bronzes. But today comes a chance of that elusive gold. Cardiff's Robert Davies takes on Cuba's Yunier Fernández in the final of the men's MS1 singles. Will Bayley is in the semi-finals of the men's MS7 singles this morning and could go for gold later in the day.

Today's TV
Live Channel 4 8am-6pm and 6.30pm-9.30pm
Highlights Channel 4 10.30pm



◀ Morteza Mehrzad hits the ball during Iran's semi-final win against Egypt
TOM JENKINS/
THE GUARDIAN

Sitting Volleyball

World's second-tallest man leads Iran to final

Paul MacInnes
North Paris Arena

When the decisive spike smashed off the Egyptian defence to seal Iranian victory in their sitting volleyball semi-final it was fitting it should be delivered by Morteza Mehrzad; their not-so secret weapon, he is also the world's second-tallest man.

Mehrzad, 36, is 8ft 1in tall. He was born with gigantism and also uses a wheelchair after a bike accident as a teenager caused an injury that stopped his right leg from growing. When the ball is served in his sport he must push his head down to keep it under the cord of the net.

When he arrived at the Paralympic village in Paris he was forced to sleep on the floor because there was not a bed big enough for him. He is shy, disliking the attention his condition brings, and when he plays on the court he rarely smiles. You could be forgiven for feeling sorry for him.

And yet, when his coach Hadi Rezaei talks about Mehrzad, he says that working with him has been "one of the most important things I have done during my whole life".

And it is Mehrzad who will bring the attention of the Iranian nation, and of a global audience too, to this sport and the final against Bosnia and Herzegovina today. While he may not smile much, there is no doubting the

passion Mehrzad has for his sport; in the decisive fourth set of a 3-1 victory, he dominated play and celebrated each point he won with two pump-fists.

This is Rezaei's seventh Paralympic Games as the coach of Iran's sitting volleyball team, leading them to four gold medals. He was also a player before that, winning gold three times in Seoul, Barcelona and Atlanta. So the legend has it, he learned of Mehrzad and his exceptional height after the young man featured in a programme on Iranian TV. Rezaei reached out to him and encouraged him to try out sitting volleyball. Mehrzad, Rezaei says, had been living in seclusion. "He had been isolated from the population," he says. "I was able to bring him into society."

Mehrzad developed his skills under Rezaei's tutelage and duly became a potent ingredient in Iran's recurring success. An outside hitter, it is Mehrzad's job to finish off the fast paced, intricate passing moves that are a requirement of the sport. He has the awareness and the power, and his

height gives him leverage. Since coming into the Iranian squad for the Rio Games, he has won two gold medals, with a chance of a third today.

Rezaei chose to rotate his star player in and out of the side in the semi-final, conscious of protecting him against injury. That said, Iran are hardly a one-man band and neither are they short on players of grand stature. The way the Egyptian players celebrated every point they won showed how much respect they had for their opponents.

Iran now go on to face rivals Bosnia and Herzegovina, a team they defeated in the final of the world championships two years ago. "I would like to let you know that tomorrow, all people all around the world will be able to watch one of the most important games," Rezaei said. "The disabled athletes will be able to show their ability and capability, and let's see what they can do. But if I win the match or am just a finalist it will be my great pleasure to be there, I will be more than happy."

The issue of Mehrzad's bed also appears to have been resolved. In Tokyo he had a bed custom-made for him but in Paris, International Paralympic Committee officials had told the Iran team that they would instead provide extensions to a standard athlete's bed. This proved insufficient and resulted in Mehrzad sleeping on the floor, information Rezaei revealed in an interview with Olympics.com.

He insisted his athlete would cope, but it provoked media interest and it appears that an inquiry by the BBC children's programme Newsround led the IPC to return to the problem. After the semi-final, Rezaei was able to confirm that his star now has a bed that fits him. "The problem has been solved," he said.

'Morteza had been isolated. I brought him into society'

Hadi Rezaei
Iran sitting volleyball coach

Table tennis

Twomey wins hearts as she bags second bronze

Tanya Aldred
South Paris Arena

Table tennis is the game of the youth club and the hostel, the campsite and the school gym, the park and the prison. It is also played by elite athletes with rubber wrists and quicksilver reflexes, like 14-year-old British schoolgirl Bly Twomey. (Though, it turns out, elite athletes or not, they still have to crawl under the table to pick up errant balls.)

Twomey, the fourth seed, already had a bronze medal, with Floss Pickard in the WD14 doubles last Thursday, when she walked out for her WS7 singles semi-final against the seventh seed, Turkey's Kubra Korkut yesterday.

A curtain of light brown hair hanging round her face, Twomey charged into an early two-set lead, nimble and dynamic. But Korkut found her mojo and took the next three sets on the trot in a 21-minute burst to win 9-11, 7-11, 11-6, 11-5, 11-5.

Twomey would have to settle for another bronze. "It's an amazing experience," she said. "It gives me a lot of hope to know I'm the same level as them."

There was a huge contingent from the Brighton Table Tennis club to support their home players, Twomey and Will Bayley – formerly of Strictly Come Dancing and a silver

medallist at Tokyo – who plays in the MS7 semi-finals today. "We love you Bly, we do," they chanted, bringing a touch of the football stadium to the South Paris Arena.

The director of the club, Tim Holtam, was watching with 35 members and another 100 were due to arrive yesterday afternoon, many of them children in foster care and children who have never left the country before, able to come because of funding.

"It's an amazing community," he said. "And we're trying to put a silver lining on it. We didn't want her to win



Bly Twomey is the youngest ever British para table tennis player

Paralympics

because we want to extend the party to LA in four years."

Twomey first went to the club at Easter 2021, to a multi-sport camp run thanks to the Holiday Activities and Food programme inspired by Marcus Rashford. "She picked up a bat and it was perfect timing as Will was at the club full-time after Tokyo. He has guided her and showed her how to play," said Holtam.

"She's a category seven athlete and there has never been a player in class seven involved in able-bodied table tennis – she's No 2 in England in the able-bodied under-14s. She's the youngest ever British para table tennis player, the youngest medallist anywhere in the world. We are so proud of her."

Twomey was born with cerebral palsy and has talked about how table tennis has given her confidence. Her identical twin, Ellis, watching from the stands with their cousins, agreed. "I feel very proud of her. She's become a lot more confident and happy about her disability. She used to be quite sad and think of herself as not as good as other people, but now she's a champion."

While Twomey's and Korkut's match was under way, others took place where players in wheelchairs, players with prosthetic limbs and players with one arm whipped the ball from corner to corner. British Para Table Tennis's Adele Stach-Kevitz wants to spread the word.

"I'd love to have the problem of too many athletes to choose from," she said. "At the moment we have classifications where we have no athletes. In the disability space there may be people who think they are too disabled to enjoy a sport, it's really not the case."

'The happiest person'
Kinghorn makes it four medals from four events with T53 400m silver

Page 13 →

at life means, you want to make the most of it. I've worked to do that and it has not been without an incredible, incredible support system."

And next? Spending time with the 60 or so loved ones, including her parents, and Sophie, who are in Paris, and perhaps a bit of shopping.

Alice Tai collected her second gold and her fourth medal of the Games, charging through the field to win the S8 50m freestyle on a happy night for ParalympicsGB in the pool. Tai, who chose to amputate her right leg below the knee to alleviate years of pain just two years ago, was visibly surprised. "It's usually such a close race, I'm more shocked that I went sub-30, I'm getting so close to my old times," she said.

Just 20 minutes earlier, Becky Redfern had won the SB13 100m breaststroke by 1.68sec, her first gold after silvers in Tokyo and Rio. "It feels really surreal," she said. "I was half-expecting someone to come out of lane one and beat me. A gold medal is just crazy."

The youngest member of the GB team, the 13-year-old Iona Winniffrith, took silver in the SB7 100m breaststroke behind neutral athlete Mariia Pavlova.

Athletics

Ingebrigtsen and Kerr have no answer to Nuguse's sprint finish

Sean Ingle

Over the past 18 months, we have become used to seeing Josh Kerr slugging it out for gold and glory in the world's biggest 1500m races. But when the Scot squeezed hard on the trigger over the final 200m at Zurich's Weltklasse last night he found nothing left in the barrel.

But Kerr wasn't the only one struggling to keep up with the searing pace. The Olympic champion Cole Hocker of the US was also too far back when the pacemaker Elliot Giles dropped out with 400m to go, and Norway's Jakob Ingebrigtsen kicked for home.

Suddenly a race that had been billed as the rematch of the big four in Paris boiled down to two men: Ingebrigtsen and US star Yared Nuguse.

Ingebrigtsen was the fastest man in the field, and broke the longstanding 3,000m world record last week. But he has been sick ever since. It meant that his kick for home lacked conviction. Nuguse, who won bronze in Paris, kicked clear for a shock win in 3 mins 29.21 sec.

Ingebrigtsen was second in 3:29.52, with Hocker nearly a second back in third. Kerr, who had talked a good game, faded to finish fifth in 3:31.46.

"This race was so highly anticipated and I knew that it was going to be quick," said Nuguse. "Everyone could have got this race. I am glad I was able to win."

Ingebrigtsen was not too disappointed. "My race was better than I expected it to be yesterday," he said. "I still haven't recovered. It was worth it to come here and race."



▲ Yared Nuguse celebrates his 1500m win with Jakob Ingebrigtsen

It was cold and wet in Zurich, but that did not stop the Olympic 200m champion Letsile Tebogo putting in the performance of the night. The 21-year-old from Botswana looked to be beaten by American Kenny Bednarek, but in the final 10 metres he got up to win in 19.55, less than a tenth of a second slower than his time in Paris. Bednarek earned a PB in second in 19.57.

Elsewhere, Dina Asher-Smith's fine post-Olympic form continued as she finished third in a high-quality 100m. Asher-Smith had a dream start, but she slowed with 15 metres to go as world champion Sha'Carri Richardson came through to win in 10.84, with Olympic champion Julien Alfred second in 10.88 and Asher-Smith a hundredth of a second further back.

Britain's Georgia Bell continued her good form by finishing second in the 800m in 1:57.94. But she had no answer when the Olympic silver medallist Mary Moraa kicked for home to win in 1:57.08. Gemma Reekie faded to finish fourth in 1:58.49.

In the 5,000m, Olympic champion Beatrice Chebet was on target for a world record at halfway but drifted to finish eight seconds off the 14:00.21 set by Gudaf Tsegay last year.

Rugby union

Slade pleas for England to keep blitz defence

Gerard Meagher

Henry Slade is targeting an early return from shoulder surgery to play a key role in England's autumn internationals and wants Steve Borthwick to stick with the ultra aggressive blitz defence system despite Felix Jones's impending departure.

Slade, one of England's vice-captains, has emerged as a defensive leader since Jones's arrival, having been overlooked by Borthwick for last year's World Cup. Jones's blitz system is similar to that employed at Exeter and, as outside centre, Slade arguably has the most important role.

Despite early teething problems in the Six Nations, the system has shown promising signs – making Jones's resignation all the more of a setback for Borthwick and his players. The Irishman has a 12-month notice

period, but it remains to be seen if he will still be in situ when England host the All Blacks, Australia, South Africa and Japan in November.

Slade is recuperating after a shoulder operation five weeks ago but while the initial prognosis was that he would miss the autumn campaign he said he is "pushing the boundaries" to ensure rapid recovery.

"I really enjoyed meeting with Felix," said Slade. "I thought he was a really good coach. I learned quite a lot from him. It was a bit of a shock, him leaving."

"I do really enjoy defending like that. It's an incredibly aggressive way of defending, if we can keep going with that I'd be really happy. Obviously it's not up to myself, it's up to Steve and the coaches. Whoever comes in, if we can that would be great."



▲ Henry Slade hopes to be available for the autumn internationals

Swimming

Truwit takes silver a year on from near-death shark attack

Tanya Aldred
La Défense Arena

Even in the story-laden world of the Paralympics, where things are never monochrome, it is hard to trump getting your leg bitten off by a shark one year and swimming for medals in Paris the next.

Yet that is the true tale behind the success of Ali Truwit, the 24-year-old former Yale competitive swimmer and now silver medallist at La Défense Arena in the S10 400m freestyle, who in 2023 fought off a shark in the waters of Turks and Caicos in the Atlantic Ocean, and saved her own life by racing 70 metres to a boat, having lost part of her left leg.

Truwit was on a celebratory snorkelling trip with her friend Sophie one flawless May morning, days after graduating from Yale University. In the aftermath of the attack, after Sophie had stemmed the flow of blood by tying a makeshift tourniquet as the boat raced back to land, she was airlifted to hospital where the

doctors fought first to save her life, and then operated on her leg, eventually amputating just below the knee.

Incredibly, just four months after the attack, she contacted her old swimming coach James Barone and asked him if he would help her again. By late October, she had swum in her first para competition, where meeting other athletes was a turning point. Less than a year after that, after four minutes and 31 seconds in the water, second behind Canada's Aurélie Rivard, she now holds a silver medal.

Just where does that extraordinary ability to bounce back come from? "My parents have done an incredible job in raising me and my three brothers to be adaptable and to try to look for the positives in life," she says, grinning in her swimming costume and cap, "and so when I was faced with a life-changing trauma, I worked to see the positives and to focus on gratitude and let that carry me and adapt to the situation I was in."

"But I would also say that when you're truly faced with death and you understand what a second chance



▲ Ali Truwit says her parents have taught her to 'be adaptable' in life

Determined Draper primed for ultimate test against Sinner

Continued from back page

performance of the tournament, maintain aggression behind his forehand on the biggest points and be clinical in attack in order to win.

In the early hours yesterday, after the Italian's tough win over Daniil Medvedev, the first mention of Draper drew a massive smile on Sinner's face. In recent years they have become good friends after they began to send each other supportive texts. At the Canadian Open last month, they played doubles together and Draper was strongly supportive of Sinner after the Italian announced

two weeks ago that he twice tested positive for the banned substance clostebol in March before an independent tribunal had found that he had no significant fault or negligence.

"We're obviously young," said Draper. "We're playing this incredibly tough sport. There's a lot of emotional ups and downs. There's a lot of tough moments. So I think it started through sending messages to each other when we're having bad moments or good moments."

This match-up also underlines how individual and distinct each journey is. While Draper won their only professional match at Queen's

in 2021, their first on-court meeting came back in 2017 in a junior doubles match held in Berlin when they were 15 years old. Sinner, who combined tennis with a promising skiing career in his youth, was not a top junior and he reached just No 133 in the rankings compared to Draper's top junior ranking of No 7. During that junior event, Sinner did not even make it out of the singles qualifying draw: "I remember playing him in doubles and we were saying, 'Oh, hit to him!' because he's not the best player on the court," Draper said, smiling.

However, as Draper fought with his body and was frequently side-

lined by injuries in his first years as a professional, he watched as Sinner and other players from their generation overtook him and went on to enjoy the type of career that, at some points, seemed far from his grasp.

While discussing Raducanu's triumph and the unrealistic expectations that followed her US Open title win at a time when she was not physically ready for the tour, Draper noted that he now views his injury layoffs as a blessing in disguise. They have taught him exactly what he needed to do to be successful in the sport.

"It's made me realise that this is something where I have to put all my life into this sport," he said. "I have to eat the right things, train even harder than I ever have done before. Get good people around me and kind of shut myself off and really focus on what's going to make me one of the best players in the world. And I think learning those lessons, learning from other players and

There's a lot of ups and downs - a lot of tough moments

Jack Draper
British men's No 1

their different experiences, and seeing what's gone on with me, I think it's definitely important that I really looked at myself and tried to figure out how I'm going to be consistent."

Finally, Draper is exactly where he should be, tussling with the best players in the world in the latter stages of one of the biggest tournaments. He already has all the weapons, the speed of movement and a sufficiently well-rounded game to not just duel with Sinner as an equal, but also to ensure that, regardless of what happens, this is only just the beginning of his success at the very highest level of his sport.



Head to head	
0	1
Jannik Sinner Ita	Jack Draper GB
World ranking 1	World ranking 25
Age 23	Age 22
Height 6ft3in	Height 6ft4in
Plays Right-handed	Plays Left-handed
YTD W/L 48/5	YTD W/L 25/17
Career prize money \$24m	Career prize money \$3m
US Open best SF 2024	US Open best SF 2024

Cycling Williams wins 'chaotic' stage to extend Tour of Britain lead

William Fotheringham

Steve Williams tightened his grip on the Tour of Britain on the uphill finish in Barnsley, extending his lead with a 10sec time bonus by winning

stage three. It was a second stage win in two days for Williams at the end of a pulsating four hours of racing across Yorkshire. It was far from plain sailing, however, with first Julian Alaphilippe and then Louis Sutton giving the Welshman and his Israel-Premier Tech team a torrid time.

On a murky day, with the cloud hanging low over the hills on the edge of the Peak District, Alaphilippe was on the offensive immediately, spending the first 70km out front in a four-rider group. The Frenchman had started the stage in third, just 16sec behind Williams, so the Welshman's team were forced to chase hard to keep him within reach.

With the threat from Alaphilippe neutralised, Sutton - bearing the

bloody marks of a mid-stage crash on a greasy left-hand bend - then managed to elude the peloton, slipping clear in an eight-man group which gained a minute, making the 22-year-old the race leader "on the road" for about 40km.

Sutton is still an amateur, but he has built a strong record racing in France and Spain for AVC Aix-en-Provence, and his effort forced Williams' teammates to chase hard once again. As the pursuit intensified, the cumulative effort told on the double Olympic champion Remco Evenepoel, who slid off the back and eventually lost 2min 30sec.

"The roads were really demanding, the weather was pretty bad, and it was a messy, chaotic stage," said

Williams. "The way [the team] controlled that was incredible, the way they brought the group back at the end was one of the most impressive things I've seen."



Steve Williams has claimed back-to-back stage victories

Sutton cracked with 19km to go, but he limited his losses over the final climb to move up to sixth overall; with the peloton whittled down to about 20 riders coming into Barnsley, the way was clear for Williams to fight off a challenge from Tuesday's stage winner Paul Magnier and the Italian Edoardo Zambanini at the finish.

Alaphilippe also lost time on the run-in, so Williams' closest challenger is now the young Scot Oscar Onley, who is 16sec behind and does not have the legs of the Welshman in a sprint. On paper, today's flat stage from Derby to Newark should be more straightforward, but if the wind blows and there are tired legs after two remarkably tough stages, there is still room for the unexpected.

Sport
Cricket'Bit miserable'
Buttler backed
to rediscover
joy of playingSimon Burnton
The Kia Oval

Brendon McCullum has backed Jos Buttler to captain England back to white-ball prominence, insisting he is confident the 33-year-old is the right man to lead the limited-overs teams. But he also suggested Buttler has been hampered by the fact he is "not naturally as expressive as some" and "has been a bit miserable at times".

McCullum said his own primary task as coach will be "to create an

environment where guys feel positive, where they feel like they can allow their talent to come out".

Buttler led England to victory at the 2022 T20 World Cup five months after taking over from Eoin Morgan, but has not been able to sustain that level of success, with the team enduring extremely disappointing 50- and 20-over tournaments in the past 10 months.

Those performances cost the white-ball coach, Matthew Mott, his job, with McCullum this week adding that role to his Test team duties. He officially takes over the white-ball sides in January.

"He's done a great job," McCullum said of Buttler. "He won a World Cup as captain. He's an incredibly gifted player. He's a fine leader."

"My job is to get the best out of him so that all those that sit in the dressing room feel like they can be 10ft tall and bulletproof when they walk out to play and they know that



▲ Jos Buttler's calf injury has ruled him out of the T20s against Australia

the skipper is going to enjoy the ride with them. What I want from Jos is for him to enjoy the next few years. If he was to retire today he'd go down as probably the greatest white-ball player England's produced. So the opportunity for the next three or four years, however long he plays for, is just to enjoy it. Not to protect anything. Just get the most out of all those guys around him, keep walking towards the danger, play with a smile on his face and try to do something which is really cool, where you

can look back and say: 'Gee, I really enjoyed those last few years.'"

Buttler will not be able to reboot his captaincy just yet, after being ruled out of the T20 series against Australia, which starts next Wednesday, with a recurrence of the calf injury that has derailed his season. He has not played since England's T20 World Cup semi-final loss to India in June, having picked up the injury during a beach run on holiday. He may also be ruled out of the ODI series against Australia that begins on 19 September.

Phil Salt, who has also understudied for Buttler as captain of Manchester Originals in the Hundred, will lead the T20 side, with Harry Brook pencilled in as his likely replacement for the ODIs. Jordan Cox, the uncapped Essex batter, has been added to the 50-over setup as cover and Surrey's Jamie Overton, playing as a batter while recovering from a lower back stress fracture, joins the T20 squad.

England punt on Hull shows best
of McCullum's maverick streak

Plan to freshen up the Test side while staying successful is now likely to be enacted in limited-overs teams

Ali Martin
The Kia Oval

A summer that began with Brendon McCullum flying halfway around the world to call time on Jimmy Anderson's remarkable England career ends with the head coach more powerful than ever. And it may just be that Josh Hull, due to make his Test debut against Sri Lanka at the Oval today, embodies the maverick streak that has led to the New Zealander being handed the keys to all three England men's teams.

On the face of it, Hull, 10 first-class games and a bowling average of 62, should be nowhere near ready, even in a series wrapped up at 2-0 with one to play. But as with horses, his other passion, McCullum is now picking on attributes over form.

Hull is 20 years old, 6ft 7in tall and a left-armer with it. And like Jeetan Patel, England's assistant coach who profited from the rough outside off stump created by Keith Barker at Warwickshire, Shoaib Bashir, as an off-spinner, should benefit also.

Could it go wrong for young Hull on the day? McCullum accepted this was a possibility. In the past two and a half years he and Ben Stokes have fostered an environment that has empowered five bowlers to claim five-wicket hauls on debut, but as someone who likes a punt, McCullum knows past performance does not guarantee future results.

Like Bashir earlier in the year, however, Hull is not a punt per se, rather a long-term investment that



▲ Brendon McCullum is all smiles in an England team meeting at the Oval
JOHN WALTON/PA

is not expected to reap immediate results. "You're not after that instant gratification when you pick them," said McCullum.

"We hope he goes well. He might take a 10-fer. But it kind of doesn't matter because we see him as someone who is worth investing in. Whatever happens, we will wrap our arm around him and make sure he knows he's firmly in our sights for the future."

Third Test
The Kia Oval

11am 19°

England
B Duckett, D Lawrence, O Pope (capt), J Root, H Brook, J Smith (wkt), C Woakes, G Atkinson, O Stone, J Hull, Shoaib Bashir

Sri Lanka
D Karunaratne, P Nissanka, Kusal Mendis, A Mathews, D Chandimal (wkt), D de Silva (capt), Kamindu Mendis, M Rathnayake, A Fernando, I Kumara, V Fernando

Umpires C Gaffaney (NZ) and J Wilson (WI)
TV umpire P Reifel (Aus) Referee D Boon (Aus)
TV Sky Sports Cricket Radio BBC 5 Live Extra

Over-by-over Join Rob Smyth and Tim de Lisle for live coverage
theguardian.com/cricket

mantra will transfer across as a generational shift takes place. While announced before his own contract extension to 2027, the fresh-faced squads to take on Australia are understood to have had his direct input.

If McCullum can unlock Buttler's route to enjoying cricket again, and reset an increasingly downbeat culture that, during the T20 World Cup, led to one player being told by a member of the leadership group to apologise to his teammates for a poor shot, then Buttler's tenure, while phased by injury, could yet witness an upturn.

For the Test side, a previously tidy narrative arc that had England looking to peak for the series against India and Australia next year is now more open-ended. Not discounting that things can change – just ask Matthew Mott – McCullum's final assignment will be the 2027 Ashes at home. It is a series he expects Stokes to be playing in, even if the all-rounder will be 36 by then and they have not actually spoken about this yet.

After an initial two years of expanding minds and challenging old norms such as scoring rates, this summer has been about freshening up the side and making better decisions in the pressure moments. Ollie Pope, while struggling for runs of late, has impressed McCullum as a stand-in skipper.

That this has been possible while maintaining a winning streak – England can complete victory in every Test of the summer at the Oval, the first time this feat has been achieved since 2004 – may also say a bit about the quality of opposition; a growing sense that, rather than being the cyclical nature of sport, the so-called "Big Three" of England, India and Australia are starting to pull away.

"I don't have the answers," said McCullum, while still talking up this summer's tourists. "But it would be nice if it was competitive, well funded and well supported across the entire world."

Maverick picks such as Hull and Bashir defy past convention and get county cricket supporters chuntering, but, on his last point, surely everyone is in agreement.

Results

Paralympics

ATHLETICS

Women: Shot put: F35 final. 1 M Pomazan (UKR) 12.75m, 2 Wang J (CHN) 11.94, 3 A Nicholson (GB) 9.44
400m: T53 final. 1 C Debrunner (SUI) 51.60sec, 2 S K ngorn (GB) 53.45, 3 Zhou H (CHN) 55.09

WIMMINGHAM

Women: 100m breaststroke SB13 final. 1 R Redfern (GB) 1min 16.02sec, 2 O Chambers (LS) 1 17.70, 3 C Young (US) 1 18.52
100m breaststroke SB7 final. 1 M Pavlova (NPA) 1min 26.09sec, 2 I Winniffrith (GB) 1 29.69, 3 T Routledge (CAN) 1 31.58
50m freestyle S8 final. 1 A Tai (GB) 29.91sec, 2 C Jeronimo (BRA) 30.31, 3 V Ischulova (NPA) 30.79

POWERLIFTING

Men: 65kg final. 1 Zou Y (CHN) 215kg, 2 M Swan (GB) 213kg, 3 H Betteir (GB) 209kg
Women: 50kg final. 1 C Fuentes (VEN) 124kg, 2 Xiao J (CHN) 119, 3 O Broome (GB) 119

TABLE TENNIS

Women: Singles. WS7 bronze match. B Twomey (GB) bt K Tur Korkut (TUR) 3-2

Football

UEFA NATIONS LEAGUE

Group A1

Portugal (2) 2 **Croatia** (1) 1
Dalo 7, Ronaldo 34 Dalo 41og
Scotland (0) 2 **Poland** (2) 3
Gilmour 46 Gilmour 8
McTominay 76 Lewandowski 44pen
46 356 Zaleski 90+7pen

Group A4

Denmark (0) 2 **Switzerland** (0) 0
Dorgu 82, Højberg 90+2
Serbia (0) 0 **Spain** (0) 0

Group C1

Azerbaijan (0) 1 **Sweden** (0) 3
Dadashov 82 Isak 65 71, Gyökeres 80pen
Estonia (0) 0 **Slovakia** (0) 1
Susov 70

Group C3

Belarus (0) 0 **Bulgaria** (0) 0
Northern Ireland (2) 2 **Luxembourg** (0) 0
McNair 11, Ballard 17

Group D1

San Marino (0) 1 **Liechtenstein** (0) 0
Sensol 53

Cricket

VITALITY BLAST

Quarter-finals: Northampton Somerset 215-3 (T Banton 75, T Kohler-Cadmore 63) Northamptonshire 198-5 (DJ Wiley 57) Somerset win by 17 runs

Tennis

US OPEN (Flushing Meadows)

Men: Singles: Quarter-finals: J Sinner (It) bt D Medvedev (Rus) 6-2 1-6 6-1 6-4
Women: Singles: Quarter-finals: J Pegula (US) bt I Swiatek (Pol) 6-2 6-4

Golf

OMEGA EUROPEAN MASTERS (Crans Montana, Swi)

Leading first-round scores (GB/Ire unless stated):
63 A Fitzpatrick, A Garcia-Heredia (Sp) 64 M Wallace, J Scrivener (Aus) D Huizing (Neth), H Norlander (Swe)
65 R Ramsay, C Gugler (Swi), N Gerhardsen (Swi), A Johnston, B Stone (SA), S Manley, N von Delinghausen (Ger)
66 M Fitzpatrick, J Smith, A Björk (Swe) A Cockeril, (Can), J de Bruyn (Ger), S Hutsby, 67 I Elvira (Sp), D van Driel (Neth), R Hoshino (Jpn), R Højgaard (Den), L H (Chn), J Gumberg (US), M Southgate, M Kawamura (Jpn)

Fixtures

Football (7.45pm unless stated)

Lea Nations League

Group A2 Belgium v Israel Premier Sports, France v Italy
Group B3 Kazakhstan v Norway (3pm), Slovenia v Austria
Group B4 Iceland v Montenegro Wales v Turkey
Group C2 Kosovo v Romania, Lithuania v Cyprus (5pm)
European U21 Championship qualifying
Group One Turkey v Republic of Ireland (5.45pm)
Group Two Scotland v Spain (7pm)
Group Six Northern Ireland v England

Rugby union

Women's International

Scotland v Wales (7.35pm)

Rugby league (8pm unless stated)

Betfred Super League

Castleford v Leigh, Leeds v Hull, Warrington v St Helens

Wigan v Hull KR

Cricket (7pm unless stated)

Third Test (first day of five)

England v Sri Lanka, the Oval, (11am)

Second T20 international

Scotland v Australia, the Grange (2pm)

Vitality Blast

Quarter-finals Warwickshire v Gloucestershire, Edgbaston

Rachael Heyhoe Flint Trophy

Southern Blaze v Central Sparks, Chesterfield (10.30am)

Greg Wood's racing tips

Haydock 1.25 Papagai 2.00 Secret Mistral 2.35 Stormy Impact 3.10 Shining River 3.45 Knight Temp,ar
4.20 Tanmawry 4.55 Kristal K ear
Bangor 1.35 Jumping Susie 2.10 Hawaii Du Festival
2.45 Jumping Jupiter 3.20 Risk nthe ground
3.55 Restandbethankful 4.30 Clararose 5.05 Gey Grey
5.35 Cotoneaster
Ascot 1.50 Shaladar 2.25 Isambard Brunel 3.00 Ballet Slippers 3.35 Diego Ventura 4.10 Pearie D'O'r
4.45 Bennetot (n) 5.20 Pedro Valentino
Kempton 5.55 Vecu 6.30 Monomyth 7.00 Green Storm
7.30 She's A Warrior 8.00 Screaming Eagle 8.30 The G en Rovers (nap) 9.00 Beyond Equal

Sport

Football Uefa Nations League

▼ Grant Hanley (right) reacts as his foul in the box proves decisive

RUSSELL CHEYNE/REUTERS



Group A1

Clarke rues errors after Scotland woe deepens

Scotland 2
Gilmour 46, McTominay 76

Poland 3
Szymanski 8, Lewandowski 44pen, Zalewski 90+7pen

Ewan Murray
Hampden Park

The knockout blows keep landing on Steve Clarke and Scotland. Just when it seemed as if damage incurred at a horrible Euro 2024 – and in the first half here – looked like being repaired, Poland snatched a 97th-minute win. Grant Hanley's lunge triggered a penalty which only added to despondency around the Scotland camp.

Until that point, even the extending of a run to one win in 13 felt unimportant. Clarke's team had recovered from two goals behind at half-time to level the scores. The key problem with what happened next is this always looked the softest of Scotland's Nations League fixtures. Clarke faces a stiff task in trying to raise spirits before Sunday's meeting with Portugal in Lisbon.

"We shouldn't have lost but if you make errors at this level you get punished," said Clarke. "There were lots of good things but it is still a defeat. I feel really disappointed for the players because I felt their efforts deserved a point from the game."

Clarke had used pre-match media duties to assert evolution of his team was far more feasible than revolution. Supporters, angry at Scotland's showing in Germany, sought the latter; in terms of attitude if not personnel. The subdued atmosphere around kick-off suggested those in the stands were unsure about Clarke's approach to a fresh start. Fans want new heroes, young heroes and want them now.

What Clarke absolutely did not need was this damaging start. Billy

Gilmour had his pocket picked by Kacper Urbanski – the pass to Gilmour from Kenny McLean was not particularly smart – with Robert Lewandowski next to receive the ball. Poland's iconic striker fed Sebastian Szymanski, whose low drive from 25 yards flew in via Angus Gunn's left-hand post. Gunn may feel he should have done better but the Fenerbahce midfielder was given far too much space to line up his shot.

It took 20 minutes for the hosts to produce an attacking move of substance, Scott McTominay blazing over after being played in by Ryan Christie. Scotland's key issue was out of possession, where Poland were being allowed to shift the ball far too quickly between the thirds. McTominay believed he had equalised midway through the half, only for the scrappy effort to be ruled out for handball. The Napoli man had beaten the Poland defence to an inswinging Andy Robertson free-kick. Robertson is now just the seventh Scottish player to earn 75 international caps.

Scotland had actually shown promise before the visitors doubled their lead. McTominay had attackers in position but could not find them

with a cut-back. Lyndon Dykes, having been found superbly by Christie at the back post, slashed at his goal attempt. Wastefulness was soon to prove costly.

Anthony Ralston kicked the back of Nicola Zalewski's foot as Poland marauded. Lewandowski did the rest from 12 yards for his 84th international goal. That Scotland did not deserve to be two goals adrift somehow felt irrelevant. Boos met the half-time whistle.

It took just 23 seconds of the second period for Scotland to be afforded desperately needed hope. Poland were unconvincing in clearing a Dykes cross, which allowed Christie to lay the ball back into the path of Gilmour. The midfielder drilled just his second career goal past Marcin Bulka. After a lengthy check from the VAR – it was unclear what for – the goal stood. Scotland had a pulse.

Szymanski almost restored Poland's two-goal lead with a glorious curling shot from range that narrowly missed the upright. Clarke twisted by throwing in Ben Doak, Ryan Gauld and Lawrence Shankland. Poland removed Lewandowski, the coach, Michal Probiez, later saying because of the "long season ahead of him".

Clarke's switch paid instant dividends. Doak played in the rampaging Ralston, who pulled back for McTominay. From six yards, the former Manchester United man confidently restored parity. Crucially, the spirit of this Scotland team had been proven intact. It was broken when Hanley needlessly upended Zalewski. The same player squeezed his penalty through Gunn. For the Scots, it was the latest in a long line of painful episodes. It was also the 17th goal they have conceded in this calendar year. Without some solidity, the tales of woe will continue.

San Marino's historic win

San Marino beat Liechtenstein 1-0 in the Nations League last night to secure their first competitive victory after 34 years of trying. Nicko Sensoli pounced on a defensive error in the 53rd minute to settle the fourth-tier clash in Serravalle, as the hosts held on for eight minutes of stoppage time to spark wild celebrations. San Marino's only previous win – also 1-0 against Liechtenstein – came in a 2004 friendly. **Guardian sport**

Scotland 4-2-3-1 Gunn; Ralston, Hanley, McKenna, Robertson; Gilmour (Morgan 82), McLean (Doak 71), McGinn, McTominay, Christie (Gauld 71); Dykes (Shankland 71)	Poland 3-5-2 Bulka; Bednarek, Dawidowicz, Kiwior (Walukiewicz ht); Frankowski, Szymanski (Slisz 82), Zielinski (Moder 82), Urbanski, Zalewski; Piatek (Piotrowski 72), Lewandowski (Buska 72)
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Referee Glenn Nyberg (Swe) Attendance 46,356

Group B4

Bellamy brings tactical revolution to Wales

Managerial appointment signals rebrand starting with tonight's Nations League opener against Turkey

Ben Fisher

Harry Wilson's first game for his country was Craig Bellamy's last, a draw in Brussels that capped a fruitless 2014 World Cup qualifying campaign. A few days earlier, Wales beat Macedonia, Bellamy laying the ball on for Simon Church to score the only goal.

At the time, a 16-year-old Wilson was a fixture in Liverpool's under-18s and Bellamy was close to calling time on a fine career at Cardiff, but that autumn international window was enough to give Wilson a flavour of Bellamy the player.

So, is Bellamy the manager quite what he envisioned? "I think he's a lot calmer," Wilson says, smiling. "As players, especially on match day, we get really het up in the moment. In the two games I was a part of towards the end of his career, I've definitely seen that side of things. Being in camp with him, he's very calm. He likes to get his point across in a calm manner. The way he's coaching and managing is a lot calmer than he was as a player."

It is the type of comment Bellamy, regarded a hothead as a player, has heard a few times. "I'm not a dictator," he says. "I have certain beliefs: 'This is what I like, this what I would prefer you be able to do.' Especially [when players are] without the ball, I'm non-negotiable. But with the ball, I am quite caring and all about love."

"I need my players to feel free. I can't put any shackles on. If you give the ball away and you hear me in the background yelling, then it's not going to help or improve the player. I have to allow my players to be the best they can be."

Part of that process has been meetings. Lots of them: 30-minute video analysis bites in the afternoon and evening to drill down messages. Players have absorbed plenty of information but inevitably there have been a few teething problems putting it into practice. "We've definitely got the players to play the way he wants to," Wilson says. "There's been a lot of mistakes in the first couple of days but that's just the lads getting used to it. When we get it right and we click, I think we can be a real threat."

Bellamy's first act as Wales manager is back at the Cardiff City Stadium, with Turkey the visitors tonight for the first of six Nations League games this year. The early soundbites are overwhelmingly positive. Connor Roberts played under Bellamy at Burnley, where he worked as an assistant to Vincent Kompany.

"I've heard the messages a hundred times before," Roberts says, grinning. "It's going to be different for a lot of players who are going to be doing different roles to what they're used to in a Wales shirt. There's no beating around the bush, it might take a few games, a few camps, to really understand and get to a point where we're happy with how we're going. The sooner the boys can take the information on and execute it, the better."

The sense is that this will be a noticeably different Wales, a clear shift in style from Rob Page's days in charge, though the Liverpool defender Owen Beck, who is on loan at Blackburn, and the Leeds goalkeeper Karl Darlow are the only uncapped players in the squad. Detail is the buzzword from players and staff.

"He [Bellamy] will be explaining things and then at the end say: 'Sorry, I've gone on and on there,'" Wilson says. "There's a lot more risk involved in the buildup. He especially wants the goalkeepers, defenders and the others to stay on the ball and take responsibility and build up the pitch that way."

The appointment of Bellamy was to push for a rebrand, the ultimate aim to showcase a Wales 2.0 at the 2026 World Cup and after that Euro 2028, when Cardiff will stage matches. Bellamy, who won 78 caps, scoring 19 goals, never qualified for a major finals and has been straight about the team's targets.

"He's already said in meetings that it's not just a case of getting there," Roberts says. "We need to get there and, when we do, compete more than we have since [reaching the semi-finals at Euro] 2016. The only way we will do that is if we listen to all the information and put the hours in on the pitch and in meeting rooms."

'He likes to get his point across. The way he's coaching is a lot calmer than he was as a player'



▲ Harry Wilson believes Wales can be a real threat under Craig Bellamy

'Driven' Carsley has the tools for England's top job

Peers praise the former Everton man for his 'very clever' tactical approaches, love of developing youth players and exceptional man-management skills

Ed Aarons



If there was a precise moment when Kevin Kilbane knew his old friend was destined for the top, it came in 2016. Lee Carsley had been travelling from his home in the Midlands to stay at his former Everton and Republic of Ireland teammate's house in Manchester after being named as Manchester City Under-18s coach a few months earlier.

"It was probably the best youth team I've ever seen," Kilbane says. "I used to go and watch them on a Saturday morning and I could see the relationship he had with players like Phil Foden, Jadon Sancho and Brahim Díaz."

"I wouldn't be surprised if there is a big pull from within the England camp to get him the job permanently. I'm sure lots of the players would want him to be the coach that takes them forward because of the relationships he's built with so many of them already from various levels of the game."

Speak to anyone who knows Carsley and they will tell you he has been consumed by coaching since being encouraged to take his first steps while a player under David Moyes at Everton. At his unveiling as England's interim head coach last week, the 50-year-old revealed he had been practising for

his big moment in the spotlight by continuing to take sessions at the Strachan Foundation in Warwick – just up the road from his home in Kenilworth.

Established by Gordon Strachan, his former manager at Coventry, it gives young players between the ages of 16 and 21 from outside the professional game an opportunity to take their coaching badges. "He comes when he can – last year he had a lot of involvement," George Mackie, one of its directors, says of Carsley. "We're very fortunate if he can find the time. Lee just really enjoys working with the young players."

Carsley has credited Moyes with helping him fall in love with coaching by pushing him and his then teammates such as David Weir, now the technical director at Brighton, and Kilbane to start taking their badges. "Even going back to the mid-90s, he's always thought a lot about the game," says Kilbane, who lives in Canada but remains close to Carsley.

"Lee was probably the most dedicated professional that I'd ever come across. He was so driven and so dedicated to his profession that he would rarely go out and he's just taken that forward into his coaching."

After starting with Coventry Under-18s in 2011, Carsley experienced the brutal side of management within two years. He had left Coventry after two caretaker spells to join Sheffield United as an assistant to Weir, but the pair were shown the door after a couple of months. They were reunited when Carsley was appointed development squad manager at Brentford in October 2014 and, within a year, Carsley was thrown in at the deep end again as first-team coach. He inspired an instant turnaround that brought him a manager-of-the-month award before Dean Smith was handed the role in November 2015.

"Lee was very mindful of the fact that so many ex-players can get a job quite early in their coaching career and the managerial side of it is almost over before the coaching has begun," says Kilbane. "Once you've had a head coach or manager's role, it's not always easy to revert back to just being a coach or an understudy."

"We've had a lot of discussions about where he was going and the jobs he has turned down over the years. Lee was single-minded in his approach because this was a vocation for him. It's definitely a long-term plan – longevity is essential for him."

Carsley's skills as a developer



'Once you've had a head coach role, it's not always easy to revert back to just being understudy'

of young talent caught the eye of the Football Association and his next move was to become an assistant to Aidy Boothroyd with England Under-19s. A year later, he was appointed as the FA's first "out-of-possession" coach – with responsibility for all age groups from under-15 to under-21. That coincided with his spell at City, when Carsley's side were beaten in the FA Youth Cup final by Chelsea.

He left City after a year despite being said to have been highly regarded by Pep Guardiola, who invited him to watch first-team training. The experience Carsley

gained there is understood to have played a key role in establishing his philosophy.

His return to his former side Birmingham as the head professional development coach in 2017 was his most recent club role and he was once more asked to step into the breach temporarily before departing in March 2018.

Since then, he has worked in various roles at St George's Park, including professional

development phase lead with responsibility for the under-18s, under-19s and under-20s, before succeeding Boothroyd as the under-21s manager after England's failure to get out of the group stage at the 2021 European Championship.

"Lee has gone the right way about it – he's coached at youth and senior levels and worked his way up through the system," says Chris Powell, who was part of England's coaching staff under Gareth Southgate and played with Carsley at Derby. Kilbane adds: "While people might say he has got

Lee Carsley has coached, often with a focus on youth setups, since he retired from his playing career in 2011
EDDIE KEOGH/
GETTY IMAGES



▲ Angel Gomes received his first call-up after impressing in Ligue 1

no experience of managing at the top level, I think that the way he has done it is much better than any other manager or coach that is in the game right now because it's all been so thought out."

Powell remembers Carsley impressing when asked to make a presentation during the 2022 World Cup campaign in Qatar before England's last-16 game against Senegal: "He spoke about their setup in and out of possession and other stuff. That can be quite daunting in front of Gareth, [assistant] Steve [Holland] and the other staff. It was huge but he asked it really well. We would all ask questions and he would have the answers."

The success of the under-21s in becoming European champions last July for the first time since successive titles in 1982 and 1984 helped Carsley's case to replace Southgate. Powell, the assistant manager at Sheffield Wednesday, thinks the team's approach in that tournament was an indication of Carsley's abilities.

"The 21s had quite a unique way of playing," he says. "He moved [Angel] Gomes to play in a deeper midfield role and also had James Garner playing at right-back. Lee thought that he had more forward-thinking players in certain positions and wanted to dominate the ball. So instead of having an out-and-out right-back he felt he could get away with having someone who is better on the ball. He showed some very clever tactical acumen at that tournament and hopefully he can replicate that with the seniors."

Anthony Gordon – a member of that side who, like Gomes, Noni Madueke, Cole Palmer and Morgan Gibbs-White, is now part of the senior squad – has described Carsley as the "best man-manager" he has worked with, and Liverpool's Harvey Elliott said the former under-21s coach gave him the "freedom to enjoy my football".

Kilbane and Powell expect Carsley to be a strong contender to be handed the role permanently if he can prove himself over the coming months, starting with a trip to Dublin in the Nations League tomorrow.

"I wish he was in the other dugout this weekend but I think Ireland missed the boat on that one," says Kilbane. "The most encouraging thing about Lee for any future employer of his is that he's touched on almost every single aspect of the game in terms of coaching and development – at club and international level."

Powell says: "He's used to this role: knowing that he has to try to take care of a group moving in the right direction. No one knows exactly where it might lead but he has these games to make an impression. It's the perfect storm – Lee has had success with the under-21s recently and we have a very talented and quite young group in the main."

"We are producing players that can make the step up from the under-21s as we have seen with the first squad. Obviously there is a lot of pressure that comes with being England manager but this is Lee's moment to shine."

'A bit of bitterness': Rice and Grealish to face their Irish past

Tensions will run high if the two England players who started out representing Ireland line up against them

Jacob Steinberg

As the England internationals who gave up on the Republic of Ireland, Declan Rice and Jack Grealish should know better than to expect to be welcomed as returning heroes when they step out in Dublin tomorrow.

Time is no healer here. The perceived treachery is not easily forgotten when it comes to Rice, who made three appearances for Ireland in non-competitive fixtures before switching allegiance to England five years ago. "It went down like a lead balloon," Mick McCarthy, the former Ireland manager, said in 2020. "I think he scored [in the under-21s] and I think he kissed the jersey."

The optics could be better, not least because Rice's first England call-up came a day after he was named Ireland's young player of the year. Some will never look at him the same way. Rejection hurts. Rice, whose paternal grandparents are from Cork, would wonder if the past played a part in criticism of his performances at Euro 2024 from the former Ireland winger James McClean. "I've played with him, he's entitled to his opinion and I've had to fight a load of those opinions from other people before," Rice said before England's 0-0 draw with Slovenia. "It might be a bit of bitterness towards me not playing for Ireland but I've not got a bad word to say about him."

Turn the other cheek when England open their Nations League campaign against Ireland at the Aviva Stadium, then? Rice is focused on his football. The main priority is kickstarting England's new era after the exit of Gareth Southgate and appointment of Lee Carsley – another former Ireland player – as interim head coach.

Ultimately there can be no doubt about the wisdom of choosing to walk away from Ireland given that Rice, who was born in Kingston upon Thames, did not take long to become one of England's most important players. Although he was a little raw at first, particularly

'It went down like a lead balloon given he scored in the under-21s and kissed the jersey'



Declan Rice (top) and Jack Grealish both switched allegiance

in a chastening defeat by the Netherlands in 2019, he soon adapted to international football and made himself a fixture in the XI thanks to the powerful stride and ball-winning abilities that convinced Arsenal to buy him from West Ham for £105m in 2023.

Fifty-eight caps on, there is no question about Rice's value to England. Although limits to his poise on the ball were evident when England lost to Spain in the final of the Euros, he will surely remain a key player for Carsley. Much has been made of the interim coach wanting his teams to play with control but the enduring sense is that England will still need the security, leadership and physicality offered by Rice, who will be a leading candidate to take the captain's armband when the time comes for Harry Kane to step down.

This does not feel like the moment for Carsley to be radical. The drastic move? That would be Carsley ditching Rice, who was rested when England beat Ireland 3-0 at an empty Wembley in November 2020, and going with his own man. Lille's Angel Gomes, who is in the squad for the first time, is the kind of diminutive, deep-lying playmaker rarely produced by English football and was a key player for Carsley's under-21 side.

But the more pertinent question is still the one posed by Southgate before the Euros: Rice and who? Young players are coming up and Kobbie Mainoo made a strong claim for the third midfield spot in Germany, but the prospect of anyone displacing Rice looks slim. The 25-year-old will want to silence discussion around his failure to dictate games against elite teams, and move on from his red card in Arsenal's 1-1 draw with Brighton, but it is hard to envisage a scenario where England do not need him to liberate their creative players.

Grealish is a bigger issue. The Manchester City winger will be guaranteed a hot reception from a hostile crowd given that he turned down Ireland after playing for them at youth level, but being booed is nothing new to Grealish. Ever the showman, he is likely to feed off the abuse. The real motivation for the 28-year-old will surely be showing that Southgate was wrong not to take him to the Euros.

It was a ruthless call, one that caused surprise in the dressing room, although it was not exactly undeserved. Quite simply, Grealish's standards dropped after City's treble win in 2023. He was not as effective last season, struggled to stay fit and fell out of Pep Guardiola's first XI. Southgate was entitled to decide others were more deserving.

Carsley has been quick to recall Grealish and will have been encouraged by the former Aston Villa man's strong performance during City's win at West Ham. He will have an opportunity to impress for England given that Jude Bellingham, Phil Foden and Cole Palmer are missing.

The jeers should be no more than an inconvenience. Ireland will be desperate for revenge. Grealish and Rice will back themselves to drown out the noise.

Gibbs-White 'buzzing' over Three Lions' new dawn

David Hytner

Morgan Gibbs-White believes Lee Carsley has the tactical and management smarts to secure the England manager's job on a full-time basis. The Nottingham Forest attacking midfielder knows Carsley well from playing under him at under-21 level with England, a relationship that began in November 2021.

Carsley gave Gibbs-White 15 of his 18 under-21 caps and relied on him in the No 10 role during the team's European Championship victory in the summer of last year.

Carsley has given Gibbs-White a first senior call-up as he prepares for his opening game in interim charge against Republic of Ireland in Dublin tomorrow. England then face Finland at Wembley on Tuesday. Carsley is set to remain in the role for the October and November international windows and strong performances could lead to his appointment as the successor to Gareth Southgate.

"I know how he works," Gibbs-White said. "He's great tactically and as a man-manager and I was buzzing when I heard he'd got the job. I felt he really deserves it. Hopefully these games work out well for him and then you never know what the future holds. He's told me to be myself, express myself – that's the reason why I got the call-up."

Gibbs-White had a storied England youth career, having been a part of Steve Cooper's Under-17 World Cup-winning team in 2017. Angel Gomes and Emile Smith Rowe are the other players to have won that tournament and the under-21 Euros, with Carsley also naming Gomes in his senior squad. "In terms of having a winning mentality at age-group level, winning trophies, winning tournaments... hopefully that is something I can bring to this squad," Gibbs-White said.

Gibbs-White, the first Forest player called up by England since Stuart Pearce in 1997, knows his chance of making his debut at some point over the next week has increased because of the absences of Jude Bellingham, Cole Palmer and Phil Foden.

"They are probably three of the best players in the world so to be behind them is a good and a bad thing," Gibbs-White said. "I need to concentrate on doing what I do best and hopefully the opportunity will come."



▲ Morgan Gibbs-White played for Lee Carsley at under-21 level

Longevity Lee

Why Carsley has what it takes to remain England manager

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TOM JENKINS/THE GUARDIAN

Ten Hag's job at risk if game model does not improve

Exclusive
Jamie Jackson

Erik ten Hag's game model has to start impressing Manchester United's Ineos-led football department or he is in danger of being removed, with the style of play this season viewed as underwhelming. United entered the international break having won once and lost twice in the Premier League in a disappointing start.

There is recognition inside the club that Ten Hag has been undermined by injuries and needs time to integrate his five summer signings, but also serious concern regarding how he sets up the side. The Dutchman's game model is being scrutinised by United's football department, which is overseen by Sir Jim Ratcliffe and led by Dan Ashworth, the sporting director, and Jason Wilcox, the technical director. A major part of Wilcox's role is to monitor how the first team play.

United's 3-0 loss to Liverpool on Sunday was a poor display in which the team were vulnerable in midfield and defence, as they were in a 2-1 defeat at Brighton.

Ten Hag has been strongly backed by Ashworth and Omar Berrada, the chief executive, in recent days and this support remains for the immediate future though Ten Hag, who signed a contract extension in the summer after United considered other candidates, has to show his team can dominate games.

In the summer, United signed Leny Yoro, Joshua Zirkzee, Matthijs de Ligt, Noussair Mazraoui and Manuel Ugarte. Yoro will be unavailable for at least another month owing to a foot injury sustained in pre-season and Ten Hag has said Ugarte requires time to attain match fitness.

Rasmus Højlund, Ten Hag's first-choice No 9, has also yet to play. The Dane is back training after a hamstring injury so may return after the international break when Luke Shaw, the senior left-back, is expected back after a calf problem.



▲ Erik ten Hag's style of play this season has underwhelmed his bosses

'Emma was so inspiring'

Draper hails Raducanu as he bids to repeat US Open fairytale

Tumaini Carayol
Flushing Meadows

Jack Draper has taken inspiration from Emma Raducanu's US Open triumph three years ago as he looks to continue his own spectacular breakthrough run in New York before his tough semi-final today against Jannik Sinner, the world No 1.

"What Emma did was obviously incredibly inspiring," said Draper, who is a year older than Raducanu. "I've known her from a young age and



Jack Draper will face world No 1 Jannik Sinner in his first slam semi-final today

to see what she did was incredible. I was very proud of her, very excited, watching it thinking, obviously we've watched the likes of Andy Murray winning a grand slam from Great Britain, but her winning, it was just really a fairytale run. I definitely think as a competitor, it fuelled my fire. I really wanted to achieve what she'd done, winning a grand slam."

Having started the tournament with one grand slam fourth-round appearance, Draper now stands just two wins away from the US Open title after marching into the semi-finals

with a level of efficiency similar to Raducanu's 2021 run. He still has not dropped a set.

This has been an extraordinarily open men's draw and, after years of bad luck, Draper has clearly been a beneficiary with his pathway to the semi-finals. But he has taken his opportunities with both hands, playing such bold, attacking tennis and managing his nerves brilliantly in all of the decisive moments. In order to continue, Draper must now tackle one of the greatest challenges in this new generation of men's tennis.

Having established himself as the world No 1 this year, Sinner continues to perform at a supreme level with remarkable consistency and he is now 53-5 (91%) this year overall plus 33-2 (94%) on hard courts. Not only do Sinner's immense groundstrokes allow him to outhit most opponents, he has improved defensively too and it has become difficult to consistently put the ball past him. Draper will almost certainly need to produce his best serving